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CHAPEL ROYAL.

Palermo.

PICTURES

FROM SICILY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

FORTY DAYS IN THE DESERT.

SEGESTE

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

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OF THE LATE

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INTRODUCTION.

THAT Sicily, the largest and most beautiful island in the Mediterranean, should in an age of travel attract, comparatively speaking, so little notice, cannot at first sight but appear remarkable. Yet for thousands who pour down upon Rome and Naples, there are not perhaps as many dozens who cross the Faro of Messina. Its insular position, the want of good inns and roads, and more recently political disturbances and passport troubles, have all contributed to drive the mass of travellers from its shores. Yet there are certain charms peculiar to this island, of which even Italy herself cannot boast. One of these is to be found in the exquisite blending of Grecian ruins with beautiful scenery; another, in the peculiar architecture of the Normans, unlike anything elsewhere existing, in which the Byzantine and Saracenic styles are so curiously intermingled; and, to those who care but little about temples or cathedrals, the phenomena of Mount

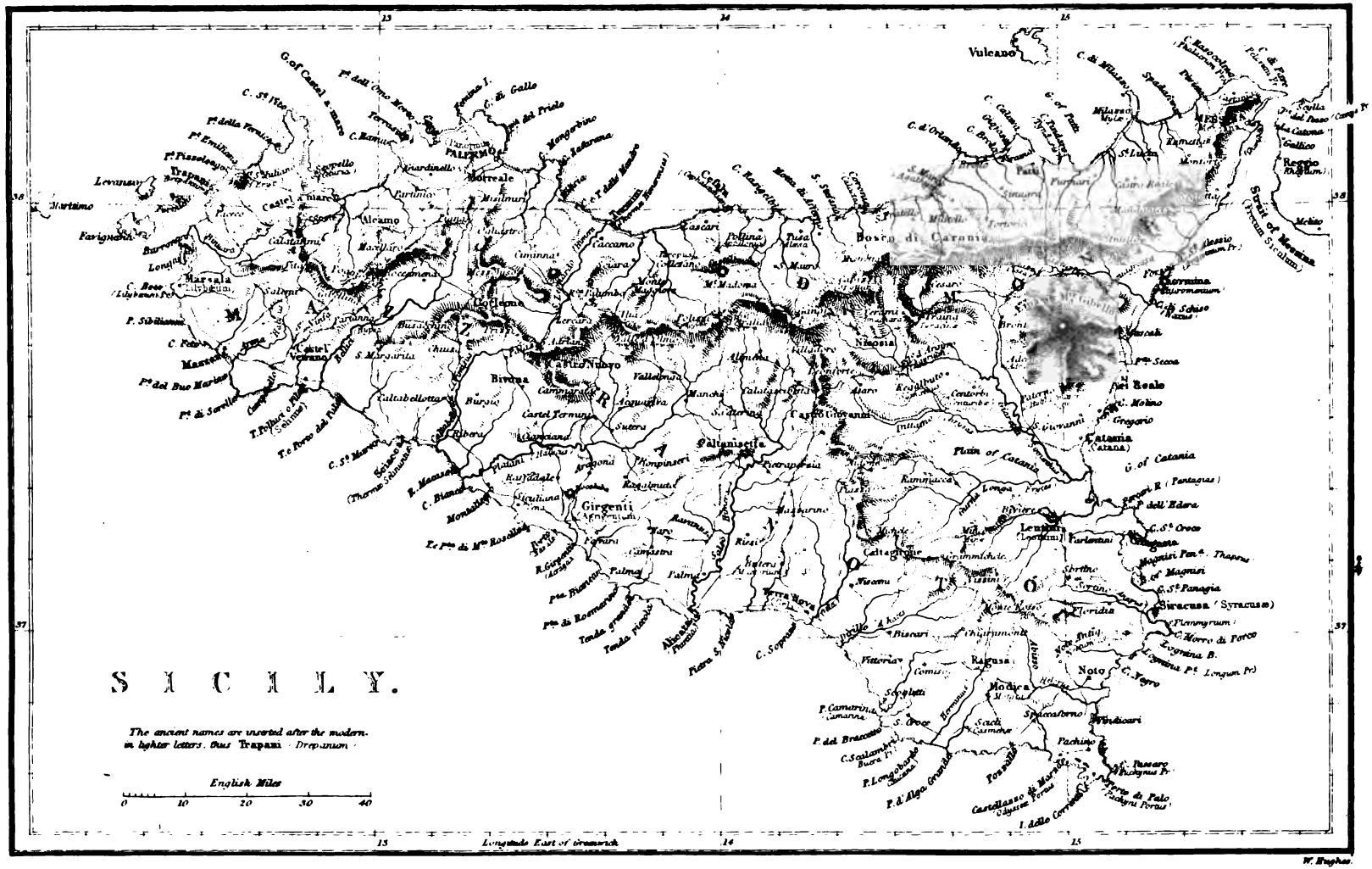
Etna—the most famous volcano in Europe—cannot but prove an attractive subject of contemplation.

Nor is the interest of Sicily wholly confined to its ancient architecture or natural beauties. The commercial and political state of this island are alike interesting to the English. Of the trade of Sicily we already enjoy the largest share; and were it freed from certain restrictions, and the resources of the island developed by a better government, it would be increased proportionably. And in regard to political institutions, it should not be forgotten that England has already interfered, and may perhaps be compelled again to interfere in maintaining that ancient constitutional government, to enjoy which, though at present unhappily in abeyance, the Sicilians have never forfeited their rights, nor renounced their hopes.

It is the object of this volume, not to go into detail, but to dwell only upon the more prominent objects, so as to convey a general idea of the Grecian, Norman, and Saracenic buildings, and of the picturesque scenery of the island. The particulars required in a hand-book will not be found here to any great extent. Most of the Sicilian cities have their own guide-books and local *ciceroni;* and an excellent and very minute guide (in Italian) has been published by Madame Power, which those who can read that language should procure, full of all sorts of valuable information; but not sufficiently discriminating the best

objects from those of secondary interest, or often, to an Englishman at least, of no interest whatever. An Appendix will, however, be given, conveying all the most necessary information for travellers.

It has been thought advisable to prefix to these sketches a short historical Introduction, recalling only the most remarkable events of ancient times, and by showing under what a variety of masters the island has passed, to give interest to the delineations of their successive monuments. These notices are taken principally from the Sicilian historians, Palmeri and Amari, and the "Normans in Sicily," of Gally Knight. The account of recent occurrences is chiefly drawn up from the authentic pages of the "Blue Book," and from information given on the spot by competent and impartial witnesses. Considerable reference has also been made to the valuable work of Smyth.



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W. Hughes

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

SICILY, like the neighbouring peninsula of Italy, has its fabulous and heroic age, in which fact and fiction are intimately blended. When, says Palmeri, we speak of Giants and Cyclops, Lestrygons or Lotophagi, the earliest inhabitants of the island, it is doubtful whether these names designated people of various nations, or merely different conditions of the same people. It is equally uncertain whether the island, first called, from its triangular shape, Trinacria, was afterwards called Sicania by the Sicani, and finally Sicilia by the Siculi; since it is a question whether these are any but different appellations for the same people. Some basis of truth there may have been for the story, that the oxen of the Sun pastured in the rich fields of Milazzo; that Dafni invented pastoral poetry; Polyphemus and Aristæus taught the cultivation of the olive; that Dædalus was a great architect and sculptor, and that Hercules landed on the island and erected temples. Among so many mythical stories, some idea may be formed of the early state of Sicily. The Sicani, at first shepherds, gradually acquired some of the arts of civilization, and erected numerous cities. Other nations, attracted by the soil and climate, gradually visited the island. Such were the Cretans, under their king

Minos, who came over in pursuit of Dædalus, and being at first received with hospitality by Cocalus, was treacherously stifled in the sulphur-baths of Sciacca, while his followers, their ships being burned, were obliged to remain in the island. The wandering Trojans are also said to have founded a city upon Mount Eryx, visited by Æneas after the fall of Troy, and whence, after the death of his father Anchises, he repaired to Italy. The Phœnicians also established several maritime colonies, as at Palermo, Trapani, and other spots on the coast. The Siculi, as many believe, of Pelasgian origin, also crossed the Straits of Messina in great numbers, and obtained a permanent footing in the island. Respecting all these migrations tradition is vague and contradictory.

The Grecian period is the most glorious in the Sicilian annals. Issuing from the narrow confines of the parent state in quest of a wider theatre of action, the Greeks landed at different parts of the island, as well as on the neighbouring peninsula, and founded so many separate states. Some Athenians cast on shore just below Taormina, built Naxos, the earliest of the Grecian colonies. The Corinthians and Dorians, landing on the island of Ortygia, expelled the Siculi, and laid the foundations of Syracuse. Gela, Camerina, Leontium, Agrigentum, and Selinunte speedily followed. The rude inhabitants were driven into the fastnesses of the interior. Art, science, poetry, all that constituted the intellectual culture of the Greeks, became naturalized in this beautiful island. Then arose those noble temples, the ruins of which still adorn its shores. Emulation was kindled between the different states, and Syracuse and Agrigentum disputed the palm of excellence. Hiero king of Syracuse, and Theron tyrant of Agrigentum, are both celebrated in the immortal poems of

Pindar for their victories at the Greek games, the former at the Pythian and Olympic, the latter at the Olympic games. These victories are also marked on their coins.

Unfortunately there also arose the same jealous struggles for political power that divided Greece itself, which exposed the island to the machinations of foreign enemies.

These colonies, owning no allegiance to the parent state, became so many independent cities, each under its own domestic institutions and with its own foreign alliances. At first popular, the government speedily degenerated into despotism. The supreme power was artfully obtained or violently seized by the tyrants, who made it their policy "to sow dissension among the people, to engage them in foreign wars, and by glorious actions and splendid public works distract them from the sense of domestic slavery." Such men were Dionysius the Elder of Syracuse, and Perillus at Agrigentum. Sometimes the democracy would regain the ascendent, but only by introducing the spirit of faction to distract the counsels and weaken the resources of the state, and bring about the reaction of absolute despotism.

These colonies were at the height of splendour when the Persians, about to invade Greece, and fearing that the Sicilian

Greeks would succour their parent states, instigated the Carthaginians to attack them. Carthage, which had long desired a pretext for invading Sicily, now found one by the invitation of the tyrant of Messina, who was driven to take refuge in Africa. Hamilcar the Carthaginian general landed at Panormus with a powerful army, but, defeated in the memorable battle of Himera by Gelon of Syracuse, was compelled to return home and accept of a humiliating peace.

After repelling the Persian invasion, says Palmeri, the Greeks reposed upon their laurels. Carthage and Persia prepared for vengeance, but had not yet recovered the blows received at Himera and Salamis. As yet Rome carried not her ambitious designs beyond the confines of Italy. Freed from foreign enemies, the Sicilians had now to turn their arms against a domestic foe. The Siculi, cooped up in the interior and pressed upon by the advancing Greeks, flew to arms, but were entirely defeated by the Syracusans, who destroyed their chief city Trinacria. To such a pitch of arrogance had Syracuse attained, that she began to overrun the weaker cities and impose heavy burdens upon them. The citizens of Leontium, thus oppressed, appealed to Athens, who, inflamed by the ambition of conquering Sicily, sent a powerful armament under Nicias, and a general of the name of Demosthenes, to besiege Syracuse; but the inhabitants, being assisted by the Corinthians and Spartans under the command of Gylippus, obtained a memorable victory over their invaders.

Scarcely had the Syracusans recovered from their intoxication of triumph, when a fresh tempest burst over Sicily. The Carthaginians longed to wash out the disgrace of Himera, and under the pretext of assisting the Segestans against their more powerful

neighbours, the Selinuntines, again invaded the island. Selinunte was destroyed, Agrigentum besieged and taken, and the whole of Sicily seemed about to fall under the Carthaginian sway. But Dionysius the Elder, at that time tyrant of Syracuse, received the invaders with such spirit that they thought it prudent to make terms with him and return home, leaving, however, some of the Sicilian cities still under tribute. Dionysius

hereupon sent a herald to Carthage, requiring the evacuation of the island; and although fresh troops were sent over from Africa, he succeeded, after a long struggle, in expelling the invaders from the Sicilian soil.

Agathocles was the next to roll back the tide of Carthaginian aggression, ever directed towards Sicily. After his death the island again fell into confusion. The Campanians, who had been employed in the late war, seized upon Messina, assumed the name of Mamertines, and introduced a fresh element of disorder. Again menaced by Carthage, the Syracusans called in the assistance of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who reduced Panormus, but was unable to expel the Carthaginians from Lilybæum, their great stronghold. Dissatisfied with his treatment, he shortly after evacuated the island. Hiero was now

called to the head of affairs. Raising an army, he defeated the Mamertines, and was saluted King of Syracuse by the grateful citizens. He raised Syracuse to the highest pitch of glory it had ever attained. His court was the resort of the most celebrated men of Greece—Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, and Archimedes were among its ornaments. As a proof to what eminence the arts have attained, may be cited the magnificent ship presented by Hiero to Ptolemy, king of Egypt, in which all the resources of the mechanical and ornamental arts were combined. With Hiero expired the glory of Syracuse. After his death anarchy resumed its sway, and the island, divided and unable to maintain her independence, became the prize for which her more powerful neighbours contended.

In the annexed coin of the Carthaginians in Sicily the legs mean Trinacria, the horse Carthage, and the head is that of Proserpine.

The Romans, having subjected all the states of Lower Italy, found the invitation of the Mamertines a welcome occasion of including Sicily within their conquests. During the Punic wars, the island and its waters became the theatre of repeated sea-fights between the rival powers of Rome and Carthage. The latter occupied Agrigentum, which after a lengthened resistance was wrested from them by the Romans. The memorable siege and capture of Syracuse, by Marcellus, terminated the independence of that great city, and Sicily became a Roman province. Its wealth drew down on it the oppression of the Roman officers, and gave rise to the Servile wars with which the country was long desolated. Among these rapacious agents, Verres was the most unprincipled. His atrocious behaviour was powerfully exposed by Cicero, who was questor of one of the

provinces. He travelled over the island, and has left descriptions of the most remarkable objects that attracted his attention.

As the Roman Empire declined, Sicily declined with it. Christianity, planted perhaps by St. Paul himself, was established, and the Sicilian cities became so many Episcopal Sees. Next ensued the violence and disorder of the Barbarian irruptions. The Vandals, and afterwards the Goths, ravaged the island, but were expelled by the Byzantine emperors, who held the sceptre with feeble and precarious sway.

The Arabs, fired by religious enthusiasm, having extended their triumphs along the shores of Africa, were invited to the conquest of Sicily by the same internal dissension which had so often introduced a foreign foe. Euphemius, general of the Byzantine forces, had stolen a beautiful nun from her cloister, and being condemned to an ignominious punishment, fled into Africa, and treacherously instigated the Mohammedans to invade the island. Syracuse was defended with an heroic valour worthy of her better days, but in vain. Taormina held out for several months. The Saracens at length overran the whole island. The chief cities became the seats of Mussulman Emirs, and the same elegant civilization of the Arabs, the same arts and sciences, the same architecture and husbandry which adorned the Moorish kingdom in Spain, were transplanted to a soil no less congenial for their development. But internal dissension prevented the Saracens from forming a compact and solid state, and thus they lay easily exposed to the inroads of a fresh invader.

About the time when England was conquered by William the Norman, a band of his fellow-knights repaired to the south of Italy in quest of employment or adventure. The state of society was then utterly disorganized. "The scenes of real

life," to quote the words of Mr. Gally Knight, "resembled those of a melodramatic theatre, in which incidents the most improbable diversify the piece, and personages the least expected figure upon the stage." The Pope, the Lombards, the Byzantines, and the Saracens, were alternately at issue with each other, and the lances of these iron-clad Norman knights, educated to war from the cradle, were eagerly sought after, and often proved decisive of victory. Profiting by these dissensions, the Normans soon obtained a footing in Calabria, and William of the Iron Arm, son of Tancred of Hauteville, was elected leader. Robert and Hubert, two of his brothers, now repaired to Calabria in the disguise of pilgrims, and the former obtained the Dukedom. Finally, in 1057, Roger, youngest son of Tancred, also came over, the last and most fortunate of this adventurous band. Even as a fugitive Greek had invited the Saracens to invade Sicily, so did a Saracen chief, deprived of his government, encourage a Norman to wrest the island from his countrymen. Roger crossed the Straits of Messina, defeated the Mohammedans in several battles, and finally subdued the entire island. His fellow-adventurers saluted him king; and thus the young knight who had left Normandy with no possession but his sword, was crowned at Palermo, the first monarch who had ever ruled over the whole of Sicily.

When the Normans, as Palmeri observes, came into possession of the island in the eleventh century, they found it inhabited by men of different origin, each having their respective laws, language, religion, manners, and customs. Besides the aborigines, there was a remnant of Greeks, moreover Lombards, Saracens in great numbers, also Jews, to whom were now added the Romans themselves. The Saracens had left the rest of the

inhabitants in possession of their respective rights—a sagacious and liberal policy confirmed by the Norman conqueror. His kingdom was administered with wisdom and energy. He carried his arms into Africa, and waged war with the Byzantine emperor. The feudal system was established, parliament called together, and Sicily, so long weakened by division, became for the first time an united and a powerful state.

The prosperity of the Norman kingdom was for a while impaired by the misgovernment of his successor, William, commonly called the Bad, a weak and indolent prince, addicted to luxury, and governed by unworthy favourites. Shutting himself up in his palace with the ministers of his pleasures, he neglected the affairs of his kingdom, until a formidable insurrection of his barons aroused him from his inglorious apathy. The conspirators seized upon his youthful son, the Duke of Apulia, and threatened to depose William, who at length arose, and by a vigorous effort suppressed the dangerous tumult. His triumph was darkened by a melancholy domestic tragedy. The young duke, as soon as the tumult was over, was running open-armed to his father, when William, irritated by his supposed complicity with the conspirators, dashed him away with such violence, that the poor child expired shortly after in his mother's arms. Nothing could assuage the grief of the wretched king, who, throwing aside his royal mantle, cast himself on the ground in an agony of fruitless remorse. Recovering at length from his dejection, he shut himself up in his palace, and, desiring his servants henceforth to exclude anything that could occasion him the least anxiety, gave himself up to his favourite pursuit of architecture, until suddenly cut off in the very prime of an inglorious, unhappy existence.

His surviving son, William, being then only in his fourteenth

year, the queen mother was appointed regent, who sent at length for her kinsman Stephen, Count of Perche, to reform the disorders occasioned by the previous reign, which he did with such success, that the people declared him an angel sent from heaven for their relief. He was at length expelled by faction, and the king now coming of age, selected for his prime minister Walter Ofamilio, an Englishman of humble birth, being, as is supposed, the son of a miller. The talents of Walter and the energy of William II. suppressed the disorders occasioned by faction and misrule, and the Sicilian kingdom soon arose to more than its original splendour. "Instead," says Gally Knight, "of delegating his power to unworthy favourites, like his unhappy father, he anxiously selected the men best adapted for the situations in which they were placed, and attending himself to all the duties of his station, was respected by the barons, beloved by the people, and only feared by the wicked. He did not further amend the constitution, but he caused the laws which existed to be obeyed. He made no conquests, but he maintained the dignity of the crown and the honour of the Sicilian name. He had armies which distinguished themselves in the field, fleets which were surpassed by none in the Mediterranean. He was no less considered by the Greek Emperor and the Mohammedan Sultan than by the Italian states. And how much he deserved to be valued by his own subjects may be collected from the words of an old chronicler, who says, 'that in the time of William II. there was more security in the thickets of Sicily than in the cities of other kingdoms.'"

As William the Good left no children, he united Constantia, his father's sister, to the son of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and exacted from the barons an oath of allegiance to them.

But after his death, the people disliking to submit to a foreign ruler, chose the valiant and accomplished Tancred, grandson of King Roger, as their king. The Crusades were now on foot, and Philip Augustus of France, with Richard Cœur de Lion, wintered at Messina with their respective armies. Tancred contributed one hundred sail to their armament; but the English king demanded besides, extensive territories in Apulia as an appanage for his sister, the widow of William II. While Tancred hesitated to comply, the fiery Cœur de Lion stormed Messina, and planted his standard upon its walls. After being compelled in great measure to yield to his demands, Tancred, with the arrival of spring, had the satisfaction of seeing these turbulent visitors depart for the shores of Palestine.

Henry, the husband of Constantia, having succeeded to the empire, now proceeded to invade Apulia, but was hardly compelled to retire, when Tancred died of grief for the loss of his eldest son. Henry now reduced Sicily, and was crowned at Palermo. Sybilla, the widow of Tancred, fled with her children to the stronghold of Caltabellotta. Thence she was soon after induced to descend by the artful promises of Henry, who having thus obtained possession of her person, threw her into prison, and put out the eyes of her son. The cruelty of the alien king occasioned a revolt of the barons, and while besieging Castro Giovanni, he was seized with a fever, which speedily terminated his existence.

Constantia now assumed the regency, until her son, the Emperor Frederick II., became of age. This great and accomplished man was brought up in the palace of Palermo, where he collected around him poets and men of learning, and laboured to soften the rugged manners of his barons. But the greatest debt

of the Sicilians to Frederick was for his amendment of their constitution. He revised the Norman code, and to diminish the excessive power of the barons, abolished their privilege of private jurisdiction, and compelled their submission to the laws. It is well observed by Palmeri, such was the nature of feudal government, that the authority of the prince was either null or absolute in proportion to his personal energy or weakness. So commanding was the character of Frederick, that he was enabled, in the year 1240, to introduce a system of popular representation, consisting of two delegates from every city or district. He also pronounced the absolute independence and unity of the Sicilian kingdom. And thus the constitution founded by King Roger, amended by this illustrious man, became the sure and indefeasible charter of the liberties of Sicily.

Frederick had by his liberal policy rendered himself odious to the Pope, and as his natural son and successor, Manfred, followed in the steps of his father, the Pontiff offered the Sicilian crown first to the King of England, and afterwards to Charles, Duke of Anjou and Provence. "A more illegitimate combination," says Mr. Knight, "or one more characteristic of the times, can scarcely be conceived. A priest giving away the crown of an independent monarch—a sovereign hunted down as a public enemy, who by the order and flourishing condition into which he had brought his dominions had shown himself deserving of the station which he filled—a people, transferred like so many sheep to the stranger—and the head of the Church, regardless of the wrongs, and the bloodshed, and the agonies which he was about to cause." The pique and mortification of a woman, according to Amari, are said to have fanned the flame of ambition in the breast of Charles. "At a festive

entertainment held in the French court, Beatrice, Countess of Provence. was removed from the superior range of seats occupied by her two younger sisters, the Queen of France and the Queen of England. Mortified by this humiliation, she returned to her apartments excited by ill-humour and dissolved in tears. On learning the cause of her chagrin, Charles embraced her affectionately, and added, 'Set your heart at rest, Countess, for before long I will make you a greater queen than either of your sisters.' And this far beyond other causes was the moving spring to his seizure of Sicily." Our great poet has shown how ambition is capable of denaturalizing woman, and Beatrice "would have given her very life to have confined her tresses beneath a diadem but for a single moment." In those dark days the donation of a Pope could give the show of right to the foulest usurpation, and invest the most selfish or revengeful scheme with the holy name of an enterprise in the cause of religion. A general crusade was fomented against the Sicilian monarch as the patron of Saracens and the enemy of the Church. Manfred boldly met his enemies on the banks of the Garigliano, in Apulia, attended by his faithful Mussulmen. "Tell him," said Charles, in reply to these auxiliaries, "that he shall either send me to Paradise, or I will send him to Hell." The contest was long and obstinate, until the base desertion of the Apulian barons rendered further resistance hopeless, and Manfred, rushing into the thick of the fight, perished as became the last scion of an illustrious and warlike stock.

Thus came to an end the Norman line, as brief as it was brilliant in its career, but leaving behind, both in the institutions and monuments of Sicily, magnificent memorials of what it once had been.

By the death of Manfred but a single obstacle remained to the full accomplishment of the designs of Charles and Beatrice; and that was soon swept away with the ruthless cruelty of selfish ambition. This serpent in the path was the youthful Corradino, son and heir of Conrad the Fourth, who had inherited the claims of his father Frederick II. to the throne of Sicily and Apulia. Braving the papal ban, he resolutely determined to assert his rights, and entering Italy with a large army, encountered Charles of Anjou at the fatal battle of Tagliacozzo. Its issue was disastrous; his followers were dispersed, and the unfortunate youth was soon taken prisoner, and subjected to a mock trial intended to give a colour of justice to his execution. Only a single advocate, Guido di Luzzara, whose name deserves to be immortalized, had the courage to espouse the cause of Corradino, and to declare "that it was a mockery to call him a disturber of the public peace who sought only to recover a kingdom to which he could boast an incontestable right." But the judges, corrupt or overawed, pronounced the doom of death; and neither pity nor mediation—not even the remonstrances of the friends of Charles, could shake his cruel resolution, too probably shared by the Pope himself, to fulfil this atrocious sentence.

On the 29th of September, 1268, the scaffold was erected in the Piazza del Carmine at Naples, and amidst a vast crowd, filled with indignation and horror, the unfortunate boy of sixteen, the last heir of emperors and kings, ascended with unmoved mien to the place of execution, accompanied by his faithful friends the Duke of Austria and the Count Gerardo of Pisa. Charles of Anjou and the tiger-hearted Beatrice took post in a high tower to glut their vengeance with a sight of the blood

of their youthful victim. A copy of the sentence was then read aloud; but when Corradino heard himself denounced as a traitor, he boldly appealed to God and the people against the unjust imputation. Hearing the noise of a blow, he suddenly turned round, and beholding the head of the Duke of Austria fallen on the scaffold, he took it up, pressed it to his bosom, and repeatedly kissed it; then embracing his executioner in sign of forgiveness, laid his head upon the block, and in a moment was cut off from among the living. By this cruel act, to use the indignant words of Luther, "was quenched the noble blood of Conradine, the last Duke of Suabia, and hereditary King of Naples." But this blood was not destined to go long unavenged.

The Sicilians now sunk, helpless and hapless, beneath the yoke of the French, and too soon had cause to repent of the inadequate support they had given to Manfred, whose sway they now bitterly regretted. Charles of Anjou fully satiated his revenge upon the adherents of the house of Suabia, and gave up the island to the maladministration of lieutenants, who crushed the wretched inhabitants beneath a load of taxes, and oppressed them with the direst extremity of feudal licence. The people were driven to despair; and while the ambitious Charles was meditating the conquest of the Greek empire, a conspiracy was set on foot to deliver Sicily from his hated yoke. The principal agent in this plan was John of Procida, a proscribed adherent of the House of Suabia. "His birth was noble,"—to quote the account of Gibbon,—"but his education was learned, and in the poverty of exile he was relieved by the practice of physic, which he had studied in the school of Salerno. Fortune had left him nothing to lose except life, and to despise life is the

first qualification of a rebel. The island was roused to a sense of freedom by his eloquence, and he displayed to every baron his private interest in the common cause. In the confidence of foreign aid he successively visited the courts of the Greek emperor, and of Peter, King of Arragon, who possessed the maritime countries of Valentia and Catalonia. To the ambitious Peter a crown was presented which he might justly claim by his marriage with the sister of Manfred, and by the dying voice of Corradino, who from the scaffold had cast a ring to his heir and avenger. Palæologus was easily persuaded to divert his enemy from a foreign war by a rebellion at home, and a Greek subsidy of twenty-five thousand ounces of gold was most profitably applied to arm a Catalan fleet, which sailed under a holy banner to the specious attack of the Saracens of Africa. In the disguise of a monk or beggar the indefatigable missionary of revolt flew from Constantinople to Rome, and from Sicily to Saragossa; the treaty was signed with the seal of Pope Nicholas himself, the enemy of Charles, and his deed of gift transferred the fiefs of St. Peter from the house of Anjou to that of Arragon. So widely diffused and so freely circulated, the secret was preserved for above two years with impenetrable discretion, and each of the conspirators imbibed the maxim of Peter, who declared that he would cut off his left hand if it were conscious of the intentions of his right. The mine was prepared with deep and dangerous artifice; but it may be questioned whether the instant explosion at Palermo were the effect of accident or design."

Most probably it was the former,—one of those fearful ebullitions of southern passion, provoked by a long course of cruel outrage, when men's minds are in that state of excitement that

a single incident, falling like a spark upon a train already prepared, may occasion the most terrible convulsion.

On the vigil of Easter, in the year 1282, at the Church of San Spirito, situated in the fields,—then clad in all their vernal beauty,—about half a mile from Palermo, a great concourse of the citizens had assembled for vespers, when the French, in number about two hundred, charged some of them with wearing concealed arms, and meditating resistance to authority. In the midst of the crowd advanced a beautiful young woman, surrounded by her friends, when one of the Frenchmen, named Droette, under the pretence of searching for a hidden weapon, insolently thurst his hand into her bosom. She instantly fainted, and fell into her husband's arms, who furiously exclaimed, "Oh, let those Frenchmen die!" "Death to the French!" was re-echoed by the infuriated crowd, who, armed with knives, clubs, and sticks, fell with such desperation upon their armed enemies, that they cut them off even to a single man. With passions thus inflamed, they then rushed into the city, broke into the convents, and killed every monk of French extraction. The butchery was horrible; no altar served as a refuge; men, women, and children fell indiscriminate victims to the tempest of popular frenzy. Such bloodthirsty ferocity, as Palmeri well observes, would stamp the Sicilian name with indelible infamy, were it not justified in some degree by the illegal manner in which the Angevins had come into possession of the kingdom, —by the murder of Conrad and so many other victims, the subversion of all law, and the cruelty and oppression under which the people had so long groaned. The French were hunted down through the whole island, and attacked in their castles, from the towers of which they precipitated themselves in despair.

The Sicilians killed every one detected as a foreigner by observing his pronounciation of the word '*ciceri*,' or vetches,—a test similar to that of 'Shibboleth,' instituted by Jephthah on the slaughter of the Israelites. Not a Frenchman was left alive, except William de Porcelet, whose exemplary virtues obtained his immunity even in this hour of dreadful retribution.

The SICILIAN VESPERS made a profound sensation in Europe, and became proverbial for an act of sweeping and terrible revenge. Severed from the causes that produced it, it has been too generally regarded as a deep-laid scheme of treacherous cruelty, rather than one of those sudden and terrible risings against intolerable wrong which shot dismay through the hearts of tyrants. Gibbon tells us in a note, that "the French were long taught to remember this bloody lesson." "If I am provoked," said Henry the Fourth, "I will breakfast at Milan and dine at Naples." "Your Majesty," replied the Spanish ambassador, "may perhaps arrive in Sicily for vespers." On the other hand, the success of the Sicilian revolution gave a great impulse to the "heaven-inspired" cause of liberty in Europe,—as it was regarded,—and encouraged the Flemish and the Swiss to burst asunder the chains of foreign domination.

The news of the Sicilian revolution surprised and almost overwhelmed Charles of Anjou amidst his ambitious projects for the conquest of Constantinople. His power, which seemed but lately founded on a rock, was suddenly about to sink amidst the shifting quicksands, and he was heard to exclaim, "O God, if thou hast decreed to humble me, grant me at least a gentle and gradual descent from the pinnacle of greatness." The preparations intended for the conquest of the Greek empire were now employed in the attempt to reduce the rebellious

Sicilians, upon whom he determined to wreak a deep and a bloody revenge.

The first fury of the storm was destined to fall upon Messina; but at the earnest entreaty of the Pope and cardinals that he would endeavour to effect the submission of his revolted subjects by persuasion, Charles consented that Cardinal Gehrard should open a negotiation with them. Overawed by so formidable a force, the Messinese appeared inclined to submit on promise of a general pardon, the restitution of their rights, and that no Frenchman should be allowed to hold office in Sicily. But all negotiations were cut short by the overbearing pride and savage cruelty of Charles, who required that eight hundred of the principal rebels should be consigned to his tender mercies. The inhabitants, stimulated by the heroism of Alaimo their governor, defended the city with the energy of despair; and if their spirits flagged for a moment in the conflict, they were rekindled by the zeal and devotion of the women, who laboured at the ramparts and struggled with the besiegers as they attained the parapets. The French were repulsed at every point, and Charles at length gave orders to retreat. The whole French fleet was attacked and destroyed by the forces of Roger de Loria, the Catalan admiral, and Charles, baffled and enraged, was compelled to flee abruptly into Calabria.

The Sicilian Parliament now called to the throne Peter of Arragon, who had married Constantia, daughter of Manfred. Charles of Anjou waged a long and abortive war to recover it, and the rest of his career was rendered miserable by the disappointment of his ambitious hopes.

In the Parliament of 1286, the sole occasions on which subsidies could be granted were rigorously defined by Parliament.

James, the successor of Peter, treacherously made over his rights in the kingdom to the detested Angevins. The Sicilians energetically revolting, called in the Infant Frederick, of whom they obtained still further concessions. The statutes of this reign are regarded as the Magna Charta of Sicily; and Sicilian historians remark that, containing as they do popular representation, responsibility of ministers, and an annual parliament, they were voted by their representatives, and freely conceded by the monarch.

It would be tedious to detail the history of Sicily during the long period from the fall of the Norman kingdom to our own day, during which, no longer having a resident king, she experienced all the evils arising from a distant monarch and a delegated sway—the invasion of parliamentary privilege—the encroachment of the barons, and the degradation of the people. Too weak, amidst the great monarchies of modern Europe, to stand in her unassisted strength, she became the passive subject of foreign arrangements to secure the "balance of power," in which England early took a conspicuous share. It was thus, to quote from a recent pamphlet, that "after the war of the Spanish succession, which terminated in the permanent accession of the French Bourbons to the crown of Spain, it was by the express interference of England that Sicily, which till then had formed part of the Spanish empire, was ceded to the House of Savoy. Seven years later, however, in the year 1720, the island was allowed to fall under the Austrian dominion, and finally, in 1735, it passed, together with Naples, under the rule of the new Bourbon dynasty of Spain, in the person of Don Carlos, the son of the Spanish monarch Philip V. During the wars of the French revolution, it was the influence of England, the self-constituted champion of the Bourbons all over Europe, that

preserved Sicily to the representative of this line, Ferdinand IV., first in 1799, when the troops of the French republic invaded Naples, and afterwards in 1806, when Napoleon made Naples a subsidiary kingdom."

At this period England, seeing the continent overrun by the French, entered into a closer alliance with the King of Naples, with a view to check their further progress, and to preserve Sicily also from their grasp. She agreed, therefore, to maintain an army in the island, and furnish besides a considerable subsidy to the Neapolitan government.

On the night of the 23d of December, Lord Nelson brought off the royal family to Palermo. Sicily was now occupied by an English force, and the king remained there until the treaty of Amiens, when he returned to Naples. On the renewal of hostilities the French advanced into the peninsula, Murat became King of Naples, and Ferdinand was again obliged to seek a safe asylum in Sicily.

At this period the oppression of the feudal aristocracy had become insupportable; but by the energy of the Viceroy Caraccioli it was greatly abridged. The people had awakened to a sense of their rights, and a general spirit of political regeneration had sprung up, when the parliament of 1810 was convoked. By his sole authority the king had imposed an arbitrary tax, against which certain patriotic barons protested as being unconstitutional. The king, contrary to an earnest protest by Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, replied by putting them in prison. It was now that England, anxious to maintain the principles of constitutional freedom in the face of Napoleon's despotism, and having, by her subsidies and troops, justly acquired a stake in Sicilian affairs, resolved to interfere. Lord

William Bentinck, a nobleman of high and generous character, appointed English minister and commander of the English forces, landed at Palermo two days after the imprisonment of the barons. He lost no time in protesting against so tyrannical a measure, but unable to procure redress, returned to England to obtain fresh powers and instructions. In a period incredibly short he was again at Palermo, authoritatively demanding the abolition of the tax and the release of the barons. As the court proved refractory, he marched the British troops on Palermo, and calling before him the heir to the throne, addressed him as follows:—"I have tried every method to make the king listen to reason, but to no purpose. Desperate evils require desperate remedies. I shall repair to Palermo at the head of my forces, and embark your father and mother for London. If by acceding to my demands you become the friend of Great Britain, you will reign instead; if not, there will be another ship ready for you, and Great Britain will crown your son and establish a regency." Seeing his Lordship thus decided, the court agreed to all his demands, while he, on his part, consented that the king should retain his title, withdrawing, however, from the government, and leaving the prince as his substitute.

The imprisoned barons were now released, and Castelnuovo and Belmonte, the two most able of them, placed at the head of affairs. The parliament, under these auspices, seriously set to work to remodel their constitution after that of England. There were to be two chambers: the legislative functions were to reside in the parliament, the executive power in the king. Feudal privileges and baronial jurisdiction, so long the curse of Sicily, were abandoned. The taxes were to be voted by parliament. To all these terms the court was at length compelled to accede,

the constitution was published, and the queen, who had never ceased to intrigue against its establishment, obliged to leave the island, to which she never afterwards returned.

But, alas, the parliament of 1813, unused to free discussion and to the despatch of public business, was speedily rent asunder by faction, which it became the policy of the court to inflame. Three parties—Royalists, Constitutionalists, and Democrats—divided the parliament; the first and the last formed a coalition to overwhelm the second. The chambers refused to vote the subsidies until certain concessions had been made, and the public business came to a stand-still. The constitutionalist ministers abandoned their posts in disgust. Weary of this state of things, all parties at length agreed to request the king to resume the reins of government. A new set of ministers of royal appointment soon contrived to bring the system into contempt; and thus the new constitution began to be regarded as a failure. But the final blow was given to it by the altered policy of that same power by which it had been called into existence.

Lord Bentinck, deeply distressed at the untoward issue of his plans, had left Sicily, and was succeeded as minister by Sir William a'Court. The war against Napoleon, which had led England to seek the Sicilian alliance, had ended, and Lord Castlereagh and the European ministers were engaged in remodelling the kingdoms which Bonaparte had overthrown.

On the 8th of December, 1816, appeared an edict, wherein the King of Naples declared that Sicily having been incorporated with his other dominions by the congress of Vienna, he should henceforth assume the title of King of the Two Sicilies. Thus, by a single stroke of the pen the ancient liberties of the island were laid prostrate at the feet of a despot. True, indeed, the

stipulation was made that the rights and privileges of the Sicilians should be respected; but, having no longer the formal guarantee of England, such promises were speedily forgotten, and the reign of absolutism recommenced. It is true also that indignant protestations were made in parliament by Lord Wm. Bentinck and Sir James Mackintosh against the gross inconsistency of virtually abandoning a people whose affairs we had so lately shaped after our own will. But the temporary failure of the experiment was unfortunately obvious, and the Sicilian parliament, which, indeed, had never taken practically any active share in the general government of the island, was contemptuously decried by Lord Castlereagh as, in fact, a mere political nullity, existing only in name.

Four years of Neapolitan misrule prepared a fresh revolt, and on the breaking out of the revolution at Naples, the Palermitans also took up arms. In such cases, the policy of the Neapolitan government, when its imbecility and oppression had produced a rising, has ever been to concede for the moment any reforms extorted by its fears; and, notwithstanding the most solemn oaths, revoke them as soon as it had again obtained the ascendency. No matter how solemnly the monarch may have promised—no matter if he have invoked the witness of the Almighty to the fidelity of his contract; the devilish casuistry of Jesuitism can always find a means of escape, by suggesting that oaths made to rebellious subjects, under the pressure of necessity, have no obligation for a king who rules by divine right alone. On this occasion the king proclaimed for the Neapolitans a popular constitution upon the model of that in Spain. The democratic party at Palermo, demanding the same constitution, also proclaimed their independence of Naples. General Pepe

was sent to suppress the revolt, and entered into a convention with the rebels; but no sooner had they laid down their arms than the king refused to ratify it, at which Pepe indignantly resigned his post. Next year the Neapolitan revolution was put down by a body of troops from Austria—Austria, the sworn enemy of constitutional government in Italy, and who dictates the policy, and directs the movements of the inferior states.

A fresh outbreak took place at Palermo on the king's birthday, 1847. From every house there issued a combatant. The convent gates were thrown open, and the Capuchins distributed arms and ammunition. The Neapolitan troops were overpowered, and ten thousand peasants came in to join the populace. At Messina and all the large towns the revolution was successfully accomplished. A Provisional Government was formed, headed by Ruggiero Settimo, an officer of high standing, and by the Duke of Serra-di-falco, distinguished as a scholar and antiquary. A large force was sent from Naples to quell the movement; but so great was the enthusiastic valour of the people, that the citadel at Palermo soon fell into the hands of the insurgents.

At this crisis it happened that Lord Minto was in Italy upon a mission from Lord Palmerston, to encourage and direct so far as possible the liberal movements then in progress. His mediation was earnestly requested both by the King of Naples and the Sicilians themselves, who now demanded the re-establishment of the Constitution of 1812, originated by Lord Bentinck. Their feeling is well expressed in a despatch from Lord Napier to the Foreign Secretary. "There is," he observes, "a strong root of separate nationality in Sicily. The history of that country diverges in many epochs and in many particulars from that of Naples; and, thanks to the protection and ascendency of Great

Britain, it did not even in the general catastrophe fall under the conquest of a foreign power, but was preserved to its legitimate sovereign, who, by the advice of Great Britain, confirmed and improved the ancient institutions of the island in the parliament of 1812. The Sicilians assert with pride, that neither when attached to the vast dominion of ancient Spain, nor when incorporated with the Bourbon family after the Spanish line expired, have they ever lost the tradition of a national parliament. Under the stern rule of Philip II.—against the levelling arts of Charles III.—they maintained their baronial assemblies; and when the feudal system fell, those mediæval forms were modified in a Constitution still embodying the aristocratic principle, which, established under the care of a great, and, as they fondly believed, a kindred nation, was recognised by the laws of 1816, and though arbitrarily dissolved and suspended ever since, has not lost its legitimate force, nor died in the remembrance or the affections of the people."

Under the pressure of the moment, the king issued a new Constitution, incorporating Sicily and Naples in one common parliament. To this arrangement, however, the Sicilians would not consent, although it was warmly advocated by Lord Palmerston himself as being most suitable to the actual state of Europe. "Sicily," as he well observed, "although a fine island, full of natural resources, and inhabited by a highly gifted people, is nevertheless not large enough to be in the present state of the world a really independent country; and were it entirely separated from Naples, it would soon run the risk of becoming an object of contest for foreign influence, and of sinking at last into the condition of satellite to some of the more powerful states of Europe." Acting upon these instructions, Lord Minto laboured to reconcile

the Sicilians to the proffered Constitution, at the same time assuring the Neapolitan king, that should they insist on their separate and national parliament, always recognised as of force by Great Britain, it must necessarily be conceded to them. As the Sicilians were now triumphant, the king, finding them determined on this head, promised compliance; but on one vital point there arose an insuperable difficulty. The Sicilians, aware that their liberties never could be safe while the island was full of Neapolitan troops, demanded that they should be withdrawn; but to this the king refused his consent, not without insinuating that it was with the view of ultimately possessing herself of the island that England supported them in this demand.

The Sicilian Parliament had been summoned by the Provisional Government when the French Republic was proclaimed; and as there existed a strong democratic party in Sicily, it was justly feared that on receipt of the news the Palermitans would separate themselves from Naples, and perhaps proclaim a republic. Lord Minto now proceeded to Palermo, where he found his anticipations in great measure realized. The Sicilians positively refused any longer to recognise the King of Naples; but, on his Lordship declaring that the union of the two kingdoms must form the basis of a negotiation, they reluctantly agreed to accept one of the king's sons as their sovereign, pursuant to an article in the Constitution of 1812, which, as they contended, empowered them to choose their king. Although he regarded this claim as doubtful, Lord Minto was constrained to admit, "that upon other grounds they had a stronger case than England could plead in 1688, to rid themselves of an intolerable tyranny; and I am not surprised," he adds, "that their sufferings under a system of government which has reduced this once

prosperous country to its present condition should have produced the determination, everywhere apparent, to separate themselves entirely from the crown and influence of Naples, and to erect an independent government of their own. The resources of Sicily are incalculable; and should it now succeed in the achievement of its independence, I see no reason to doubt of its rapid progress in wealth and prosperity." In another despatch he observes, "I cannot but feel they have a strong claim upon our sympathy and protection. The Constitution of 1812, though not formally guaranteed by England, was undoubtedly imposed upon Sicily by British authority, backed by a British army, then virtually in possession of the island. The Sicilians tell us that they were willing to submit to a continued union of the crowns, however distasteful to them, but that when the king of Naples refuses their conditions, they fall back upon the rights secured to them by the Constitution of 1812, which entitles them to seek their sovereign elsewhere. And they ask us to recognise those rights which we practically gave them. I confess it appears to me difficult to deny the justice of this demand."

At this stage in the narrative the reflection reluctantly arises —Why, if Great Britain still recognised the Constitution originally obtained by her arms, did she not, if necessary, compel its readoption? Unfortunately, while despotic governments, unchecked by public opinion, or untrammelled by parliamentary opposition, can and do follow out their selfish policy with cold and cruel consistency, the counsels and measures of free countries, influenced by the above-mentioned agencies, are of necessity often vacillating and contradictory. The policy adopted by a liberal ministry may, as we have already seen, be totally

reversed by one of opposite tendencies. Public opinion is at one time favourable to intervention in Continental affairs, at others as strongly opposed to it. Thus we have seen the despotic powers interposing with armed force, and controlling the destinies of Europe, while the proceedings of Great Britain are confined to empty remonstrances. In strict consistency, it must be obvious, that as the British Government originally imposed the Sicilian Constitution, so, if she still continued to recognise it, she ought also to have insisted upon its establishment. It is really deplorable to be playing fast and loose with the institutions of another nation,—to impose free constitutions by force, and then, while still recognising their moral, if not legal obligation, calmly stand by, and see them overturned, while a generous people, whose hopes we had excited, are reduced to a state of slavery. But the British public were totally indifferent to Sicilian affairs, demanding the reduction of their armaments, and opposed to intervention at the risk of bringing on a war. The Conservative party strongly opposed it. The French, who have always suspected us of a design to annex Sicily, were jealously watching our movements, while Russia and Austria would probably have interfered. Under such circumstances, perhaps it was impossible to do more than negotiate and protest. Yet it cannot but be evident that this vacillating policy tends to degrade England and give her an evil name. Oppressed nations accuse her of exciting hopes she only intends to betray, while the despots of Europe learn to treat her protestations with a contempt they hardly care to conceal.

The Sicilian Parliament now met amidst the greatest enthusiasm of the people, and solemnly decreed the deposition from the throne of Ferdinand Bourbon and his dynasty, intending, so

soon as their Constitution should be adapted to the wants of the age, to call to the throne some other Italian prince. So unanimous was the popular feeling, that, in the words of Mr. Goodwin, the able Consul-General at Palermo, "had the Government not made the nationality of Sicily its first object, it would have lost its hold of the nation completely and for ever. What strikes the observer as most remarkable, is the absence of party spirit: in neither chamber is there anything like a ministerial or opposition party,—all seem animated by a common desire to promote the public good without regard to self-interest."

And now having failed in their endeavour to maintain the unity of Sicily and Naples, mainly through the procrastination and obstinacy of Ferdinand and his advisers, the British Government formally recognised the independence of Sicily, and advised the Sardinian court that should the Duke of Genoa, son of their king, accept the crown offered to him, his claim would be acknowledged by Great Britain. While the Neapolitan monarch was busied in protesting against these measures, the Provisional Government were occupied in remodelling their Constitution and introducing measures of practical reform. Among the most important of these was the abolition of the *multure*, or tax on grinding corn, the oppressiveness of which had long been severely felt by the people. Unfortunately, led away by popular excitement, and contrary to the remonstrances of the British authorities, they also sent a force to cooperate with the Neapolitan liberals in Calabria. The expedition proved a failure, and tended no doubt to exasperate the King of Naples, who, finding that the French and English intended to remain neutral in the struggle, determined to reconquer the island. A large force was sent to Messina, the city bombarded, and taken by storm after a frightful

struggle. Unable to witness the horrors that ensued, the French and English admirals now imperatively enforced a cessation of hostilities, while the ministers of those nations repaired to Gaeta, and endeavoured to open a fresh negotiation with the king.

As the capture of Messina placed Ferdinand upon higher ground, the ambassadors were unable to obtain from him terms so favourable as those already rejected by the Sicilians. Furnished, however, with such concessions as they were able to obtain, embodied in an instrument called the "Act of Gaeta," they hastened to Palermo, and earnestly pressed upon the Sicilians the prudence of accepting it. But this new act, though conceding a separate legislature, reversed at once all those reforms so lately carried by the Provisional Government, and the Neapolitan troops were, moreover, to be put into possession of the island. In vain, therefore, did the ambassadors urge upon the Sicilians the acceptance of this *ultimatum*, declaring that if it failed, they must, when the armistice expired, retire with both the fleets. Such was the intense hatred of the King of Naples, —such the utter want of confidence in his promises—such the abhorrence excited by the recent cruelties at Messina, that the people refused to listen, and the proffered conditions were unanimously refused by Parliament.

On the expiration of the armistice hostilities recommenced. By the assistance of several Swiss regiments, Catania was taken, and Palermo was now the only place of importance that held out. England having retired from the negotiation, the French admiral endeavoured to obtain terms at least as good as those of the Act of Gaeta; the king amused him, and deceived the Sicilians with idle promises, and the Neapolitan troops were allowed to regain possession of Palermo. Regarding the island

as virtually conquered, all former stipulations were cast aside, and the reign of reaction was fully established. The affairs of the island were administered by a *Consulta* under the immediate influence of the king, and there is no longer the shadow of a Constitution or a Parliament. The public debt of Sicily has been doubled; the odious tax of the *multure*, abolished by the Provisional Government, reestablished; and a fresh tax imposed upon the export of sulphur. Although by the Capitulation full amnesty was proclaimed, with the exception of forty-three individuals, several hundreds have really been exiled. Martial law was proclaimed, and on one pretence or another it is believed that as many as fifteen hundred persons have either been shot or immured in dungeons, after the fashion of poor Pierio, described in Mr. Gladstone's Letters.

Of the mode in which justice is administered let the following example suffice, related to me by the English resident concerned in the transaction. This gentleman went out one day for an excursion, carrying with him as servant a certain youth, and did not return till eight o'clock in the evening. Next day he found the boy, being a suspected character, had been arrested for attacking two soldiers the previous evening at five o'clock; upon which he repaired to the police, and proved an *alibi*, the official declaring that on the testimony of the Englishman the accused should be forthwith discharged. The boy was, nevertheless, kept in prison for three months, and afterwards brought to trial, upon the testimony of a woman of bad character, suborned by the police. Through the evidence and exertions of his English master he was acquitted; but I was assured that had he been left to Sicilian influence alone, he could not have escaped the gallows. It was, in fact, notorious, that with a police composed

of the vilest of mankind, who hesitated not to make false accusations, and suborn others to bear false witness, in order to criminate individuals obnoxious to Government, no security whatever existed for any one. Even upon mere suspicion, or to gratify the malevolence of the authorities, persons are thrown into prison and kept there perhaps for a twelvemonth, until tried, when, for utter want of evidence, they are at length set at liberty. Such was the case of a certain advocate, who having been immured for some months in the dungeons of Lipari, had at length returned broken in health to Catania, where he was welcomed by Marshal Stratella with the sarcastic and insulting inquiry, "I suppose you find the air of Catania rather better than that at Lipari?"

Of the reckless disregard to even a show of evidence displayed by the military tribunal, the following story, the truth of which was confirmed on the spot, affords sufficient evidence:—"This continued violence against persons—this violation of the promises by which some classes of citizens had been induced to a course of submission in 1849—occasioned such an irritation in the public mind, that in various parts of Sicily open demonstrations were made against the Neapolitan Government; and as these were followed by new excesses of violence, there at last took place, in Palermo, on the 27th of January, 1850, a popular movement of despair. At nine o'clock on the evening of that day, the cry of revolution was raised in the same Piazza della Fiera Vecchia, where the revolution had begun two years before. As is the case with all such generous but premature efforts, this rising was not followed by the people; the police and the soldiers collected on the spot, the insurgents were dispersed after a short combat, and none were found with arms in their hands.

But as General Filangieri, at the first shots he heard, had ordered the men to bring him some victims to be made an example of, as he said—a thing which was impossible, because they did not venture to approach near enough to the insurgents as they retired firing—they caught hold of the first persons they met in the streets sufficiently near the place. They arrested six citizens, 'the proof of whose guilt was,' as the official journal of the Government said, 'the paleness of their faces.' As I was told on the spot, these men were in fact accidentally coming in from the country. Filangieri, the same night, summoned a council of war, and sent to the president the *process* (so he called it) with these words—'The accused are guilty of rebellion, and, therefore, punishable with death by shooting. By four o'clock in the evening *it must all be over*, as I have ordered a sufficient number of troops to be ready at that hour at the Fiera Vecchia, as the place of execution.' Dressed in black, and barefooted, they were led through the principal streets of the town, about three o'clock in the afternoon of the 28th of January; and in the aforesaid piazza of the town, in one of the most populous quarters, were publicly shot. The marks of the bullets are still to be seen; they will be visible in the next revolution, and they will not inspire the people with generosity or humanity towards the brigands who serve King Bomba. The orders for execution given by the government so shamelessly, the *absolute want of proofs*, and even of indications, and the notoriety of the fact, place this assassination at the head of all the crimes of the Neapolitan Government in Sicily." The innocence of the victims I was assured was afterwards fully recognised even by the officials themselves.

Such is the unhappy condition of Sicily at the present time.

With a reactionary government on one hand,—maintained by force alone,—and on the other a people profoundly detesting their oppressors, and ready to seize the first opportunity to throw off the yoke, nothing but fresh convulsions can be expected. Whether they will prove abortive or successful,—and in the latter case what form the government of Sicily will assume,—it would be at the present moment idle to speculate, although the establishment of a free parliament, with a sovereign of their own choice, and a close alliance with Great Britain, would perhaps be that most at once in harmony with their ancient institutions and actual requirements, could the working of such a plan be but successfully carried out. But it is one of the chief curses of despotism that it tends to produce the opposite reaction of revolutionary excitement, and to lead a people to rush from one extreme to another, and the longer it endures, the more does it disqualify them for the blessings of a moderate and constitutional system. On this ground alone every well-wisher to humanity must desire its speedy downfall.

CHAPTER I.

ROUTE FROM LONDON TO SICILY—PARIS TO MARSEILLES—AJACCIO—LEGHORN—PISA—NAPLES—VESUVIUS AND POMPEII.

THE road from London to Naples is so beaten, and the descriptions of it so endless, that the only apology for saying another syllable upon the subject, is to be found in the general wish of those who read books of travel to begin at the beginning; and starting off with the writer who has engaged to describe a particular country, to learn something—however little—of his adventures on the way. Upon this principle alone a few pages of wayside gossip are inserted, not with the least idea of saying anything original on a subject which has employed so many able pens. Who can hope to match the vivid, passionate, and playful descriptions of Beckford—to rival the critical acumen of Forsyth and Bell—or to add any fresh stock of information to the completeness of Murray's Hand-Book? Time was when the tourist might have made something out of even the road from London to Paris,—have expatiated on the old rumbling diligence, and its postboy with jack-boots of fabulous dimensions, with other humours and inconveniences of the way,—but in these days of railroads and submarine telegraphs, there is no excuse for lingering a moment to describe what is familiar to everybody. And with a full appreciation of the value of railroads, not only in social and economical respects, but also to the traveller, in abridging vast spaces of comparatively uninteresting country, and planting him, with a vast saving of time and trouble, at the very spot he desires to visit, it is certain that they are sad levellers of impressions, and make all countries look very much alike. You pass no longer,

as formerly, through the towns and villages, by the side of old churches and country seats,—the *rail* is always in the foreground, and the *refreshment room* the prominent object of interest. People learn to care less for the scenery, and more for the novel or newspaper, with which the flying hours are whiled away; and thus it happens that one often passes through the entire length of a country with the faintest possible impressions of what it really contains.

If there is, however, any tract that one could reasonably be willing to pass over blindfold, it is certainly the dull monotonous road from Paris to Chalons-sur-Saone. No country perhaps displays less of rural beauty than this portion of what is so sadly miscalled "La belle France." Eternal avenues of formal poplars, and bald-looking hills covered with dwarfish vines, are repeated for hundreds of miles, till the eye is perfectly wearied. To be sure, those unpicturesque vineyards of Burgundy produce some of the finest wine in the world, and it used to be something to stop and dine at Tonnerre, and drink of the same generous liquor that so fascinated Edward the Third and his barons while engaged in ravaging the plains of France, that they halted with the whole army in order to enjoy the wines.

Leaving Paris therefore by the express train at night, we arrived at five next morning at Chalons-sur-Saone, and immediately went on board the steamer which descends the river to Lyons. Had the vessel proved clean or comfortable, this part of the route would have been very enjoyable—the banks of the river being, though for the most part level, very rich, and ranges of distant hills giving at times beauty and interest to the prospect; but the French are sadly behind in river navigation; the boats are nasty and inconvenient, and so encumbered with baggage, that there is hardly standing room on deck. They have the redeeming merit, however, of being very fast; so that, aided by a powerful current, before noon we were approaching Lyons between bold and lofty hills, hung with woods and

covered with the villas of the wealthier inhabitants, to which succeeded the quays of the city itself,—lined by lofty piles of substantial but gloomy looking houses. The position of Lyons at the junction of the Rhone and Saone is very striking, and that portion of the city intervening between the two rivers is very airy and handsome; but it was not our intention to delay here, and as soon as the vessel was moored to the quay, and our baggage extracted from the fangs of the *Octroi*, we forthwith transferred it to another steamer on the Rhone, and began to descend that river with a rapidity even greater than we had done the Saone.

The turbid current is so impetuous, and the shoals so numerous and shifting, that the steering of the steamer requires a practised eye and ready hand in the pilot. Old mouldering towns and villages, ruined castles perched upon toppling crags, succeeded each other with the rapidity of a moving diorama. The banks are as bold as those of the Rhine, but want that woody clothing, and that picturesque outline that renders the latter unrivalled in river scenery. The rocks that border the stream are at the first glance repulsive and barren, but on closer scrutiny they appear terraced and cultivated with dwarf vines, which produce the choicest and most costly vintages of the south,—Coti Rotie, Hermitage, and Chablis. Never was a better comment upon the common proverb of "Never trust to appearances," than in the case of these ugly sunburnt mountains. A magnificent view of the distant Alps, extending for many a league their bold serrated outline and fields of everlasting snow along the distant horizon, gives interest and grandeur to the scenery.

Before dusk we reached Valence, and finding on the quay a diligence on the point of starting for Avignon, jumped into it, and in ten minutes were rattling out of the town. The climate had become quite that of the Mediterranean—the atmosphere was soft and balmy; the fig and almond and oleander appeared

in the gardens. At five we saw the towers of Avignon; and before the first train started for Marseilles had time to breakfast, and walk up to the hill above the ancient palace of the popes, which commands one of the very finest views in France, comprising the city with its machicolated walls and towers and ruined bridge; with the broad luxuriant valley, bounded by the distant mountains of Vaucluse, through which the branches of the Rhone meander like veins of silver upon a carpet of green velvet.

Here we are in the heart of old Provence, once the seat of romance and poetry; we breathe the warm air of the south: the people too are quite another race, with olive complexions and coal-black eyes; indolent and listless, but passionate and revengeful when excited; and rarely does the traveller pass through Avignon without some noisy threatening dispute. At seven we were conveyed to the station; and flying rapidly along, caught picturesque but momentary glimpses of the Roman remains, and the mediæval towers of Arles and Beaucaire, till an inlet of the blue Mediterranean came in sight. Shortly after, passing a very long tunnel cut through some rocks, Marseilles, and the thousand pretty white villas, in a quivering blaze of resplendent sunshine and tremendous heat, with the white sails of ships and steamers arriving or departing, the romantic rocks rising out of the sea, formed a splendid finale to our land journey,—performed, by the way, with a speed of which a lover of fast travelling might have boasted, having been little over fifty hours in coming from Paris to Marseilles. This space will be moreover considerably reduced as soon as the railway is entirely completed, when the traveller may reach the shores of the Mediterranean in between two and three days from London.

With all my haste I found that I had missed the French steamer by about three hours, and that the next would not leave for four or five days. The idea of spending so much time in Marseilles was insupportable, and as it happened that a mail

boat left next day for Corsica and Leghorn, I determined to proceed that way to Italy.

While expressing to the waiter my vexation at having missed the steamer by an hour or two, he assured me that had I arrived some hours sooner, it was doubtful if I could have left, as there would have hardly been time to procure the *visa* of the English consul, without which the consuls of the Italian ports, as well as the local authorities, refuse their respective signatures; and he assured me that two English travellers, who had arrived the day before, had lost their passage because this indispensable *visa*, for which a considerable fee is demanded, could not, in consequence of the consul's absence, be procured, together with all the others, in time. This story was fully confirmed next day by the gentlemen themselves, who I found were fellow-passengers on board the same vessel; and I set it down as illustrating the often serious hindrances which befal the unfortunate traveller in spite of all his precautions.

These travellers, then, being informed as soon as they arrived of the necessity of getting the consul's signature, repaired immediately to his office; but although within the proper business hours, that gentleman was not in the city, nor, as it seemed, any other person competent to perform his functions. The consequence was that his signature could not be procured, and the travellers lost their passage. They were men who had devoted the few days they could snatch from the cares of business to taking a peep at Italy, and they were compelled to be back again upon a given day; yet here, for want of a single signature, and through no neglect or even inadvertence of their own, they would have been compelled, but for the accidental departure of another steamer next day,—(the usual interval is about a week,)—to renounce their further journey and return home disappointed.

One thing forcibly struck me on leaving this port; and at the present time, when our national defences are the subject of some

anxiety, it may not be amiss to mention it. The commerce of Marseilles, though considerable and increasing, is a mere nothing to that of Liverpool; yet, while tremendous forts and batteries —enough to blow any invading force out of the water—defend the entrance to the French harbour, what is there to protect the mouth of the Mersey and the stupendous docks and shipping of Liverpool, should any enemy be disposed to attempt a sudden descent upon our coasts?

At noon we steamed out of Marseilles, and scarcely had its forts and villas receded from view than we entered a pass between an island and the mainland, formed by tremendous limestone rocks, of almost dazzling whiteness, dropping into the deep blue sea below, and cutting into the equally blue sky above, and apparently quite destitute of verdure, till a narrower scrutiny disclosed a flock of adventurous goats browsing on the scanty grass growing in the interstices of the crags. Here we came to a dead pause, in consequence of some trifling accident to the machinery, which could not be set right in less than two hours. Fortunately it was near the hour of dinner, which helped to fill up what would otherwise have been a very unpleasant delay. Resuming our course, we ran along the beautiful coast of Provence, past La Ciotat and Toulon, till with the sunset we entered the delicious straits of Hyères, a perfect Elysium of orange groves and verdure, sheltered from the north by lofty mountains, and open on the south to the gentle breezes of the Mediterranean.

Here we left that poetic coast, and struck across the open sea to Corsica.

Next morning we were off the island, which, bold and mountainous in character, had but little beauty. Here and there was an old watch-tower on a solitary hill, and a little cove for a few primitive looking fishing-boats. At length Ajaccio came in sight, and at a distance made rather a handsome appearance; but, as in the case of so many little Italian towns, a nearer acquaintance disclosed dilapidation, filth, and misery. The entrance of

the harbour is very narrow and difficult, and as the boat only comes once a-week, a great crowd were assembled on the pier-head, to see the vessel warp in and then turn round again with her head to sea, and also to observe what native passengers came on shore. The little harbour is surrounded by irregular half-ruinous edifices, and overhung by a fort below which is a singular mass of rocks rising sheer out of the water, the favourite resort of a troop of youthful fishers, who clamber naked as they are by footholes and crannies to the top, and poising themselves upon the extremest brink of an overhanging precipice, plunge headlong into the waves below, where they delight to dabble about for hours. The contemplation of these aquatic gambols was the only relief to the tediousness of our stoppage in the harbour of Ajaccio. Some few, getting desperate with ennui, went ashore, but speedily returned without having discovered the slightest object of interest. Yet this wretched town will enjoy an immortality of fame; for here, on August 15th, 1769, during the struggle of the Corsicans against the French, and while his mother, in a state of restless anxiety, was flying from town to town to avoid falling into the hands of the French, was born Napoleon Bonaparte, and on the island he remained until his tenth year, when his removal to the military school at Brienne laid the foundation of his unparalleled career.

Before noon we were again at sea, steering direct for the coast of Italy, and soon beheld the long range of purple Apennines, with the lighthouse of Leghorn. Before sunset we were alongside the pier, amidst a crowd of shipping. We soon ascertained that the French steamer for Naples would not pass for two days, a delay which would enable us to get a glance at Pisa and Florence.

Here began our *Passaporta* and *Dogana* tribulations in Italy. In general it may be remarked, that these become more severe in proportion to the tyranny of the peninsular governments, so that, bad enough in Tuscany, they get worse in the Papal States, and attain their climax of annoyance in the dominions of the King of

Naples. These formalities are always disagreeable, but here the worst of it is, that you have never done with them, the peninsula being parcelled out into so many little states, each with its separate police, and custom-house, and its army of needy officials. And it is difficult to say whether you are more beset by land or sea—that is, supposing you desire to go ashore, if even for an hour, to see the different ports at which the steamer touches. In the former case, if you are leaving the state of Lombardy, to enter that of Parma, you are subject before you cross the Po at Piacenza to a passport and custom-house examination, which is repeated as soon as you have gained the other side. Ten miles further, at Parma, it is necessary to get a fresh *visa* to the passport, and on leaving this little state, only twenty miles long, for that of Modena, which is smaller still, the same ceremony awaits you as in the forenoon, thus making five examinations in one day, and upon a distance of thirty miles; and so on in every state, and almost every town. The deliberation with which—unless quickened by a bribe—the lazy officials perform their functions is enough to drive a stoic to distraction. And here, on the sea-coast, you cannot land without having first procured the signature of the consul or ambassador of the particular place, and if this is happily done, there is still the same passport and custom-house ordeal to be passed. The mere expense entailed by all this is a serious item, but nothing to the vexation and hindrance that it occasions; moreover, at present, owing to Mazzini and the Secret Societies, they are always on the look-out for suspicious characters, which renders the examination doubly rigorous. It was dark a long time before we fought our way through all these obstacles into the town of Leghorn, and bestowed ourselves for the night at a comfortable hotel.

Except that you are on Italian soil, and that everything around is Italian, there is but little in Leghorn to delay a traveller. It is Marseilles on a smaller scale—a mere sea-port town, where everything around is merely commercial. Ships of

all nations are to be seen in its harbour, and natives of all countries in its streets, but in regard to art or nature its attractions are excessively meagre; and after breakfast we repaired to the railway, and taking our places were rapidly whirled over the level plain extending from Leghorn to Pisa.

After a walk through the dull sleepy streets of the last-mentioned city, we came suddenly upon an extensive grass-grown square, quiet and unfrequented as a cathedral close in England, in the midst of which stood that famous group of buildings familiar to every one by endless engravings—the Leaning Tower, Cathedral, Baptistery and Campo Santo. Perhaps the world contains nothing more singular to a northern eye: "In short, I have dreamed of such buildings," says Beckford, "but little thought they existed." Nothing here of the imposing gloomy grandeur and dark grey masonry of our gothic cathedrals, but a grave elegance and simplicity of form, and beauty of colour arising from the employment of different coloured marbles, relieved by the deep blue of an Italian sky. The mosque-like domes give an exotic and oriental cast, which adds to the singular charm which they exercise over an imaginative mind. Most travellers have pronounced these edifices to be in bad taste; but Mr. Ruskin has lately contrived to discover profound beauties where every one else beheld nothing but a quaint variety of deformity.

We first ascended the Leaning Tower, from the shelving top of which we enjoyed a curious bird's-eye view over this famous little republic, taking in the whole circuit of the walls, about as extensive as those of Avignon, and now enclosing considerable spaces of gardens. Within this narrow area how much of patriotism and of faction were once girdled in the days of Pisa's pride and prosperity! Beyond the walls, a rich flat extends on one side to the sea, and on the other to the purple Apennines, which form the boundary of this beautiful landscape.

Our steps were next directed to the Campo Santo. It is an

immense oblong cloister, surrounding a court filled with earth from the Holy Land, brought over during the period of the Crusades, and now thickly covered with a luxuriant growth of vegetation. The open windows facing this court, of Italian gothic, are tall and slender in proportion, and of white marble. The walls are covered with antique frescoes by the early Florentine artists, quaint and singular alike in design and execution, and carry us back completely to the age in which they were executed. To complete the strangeness of the place, rows of antique sarcophagi are ranged along the walls, while the pavement is composed of monumental inscriptions and effigies. From the open arcades you see the top of the Cathedral and Leaning Tower, forming altogether the most singular group of objects imaginable. We paced round and round the court, sometimes pausing to admire that fertility of imagination in the old painters, which enabled them to embody with appalling force and disgusting minuteness so many horrible images of death, hell, and judgment, and all the terrors of mediæval theology; at others admiring the workmanship of some marble sarcophagus, or poring over the stone pavement which covers the ashes of so many illustrious dead.

We were so fully absorbed by the examination of these objects, that we had not observed the gradual darkening of the sky; but so deep a gloom had settled over the cloister, with oppressive heat and portentous unnatural stillness, that our attention was at length aroused. The heavens were quite black and surcharged with awful masses of lurid clouds, the wind moaned through the cloister and blew in fierce gusts and eddies, wildly whirling the dust about the roof, while the low murmur of distant thunder heralded a storm of unusual severity. Presently a rattling noise was heard over our heads, as though some portion of the masonry had been blown down upon the leads, and some large white masses danced over into the open court, and rebounded like tennis balls, being, as

we supposed, some stray fragments of stone work from the wall above. This mistake was, however, but momentary, for a crashing storm of hail-stones instantaneously burst upon the roof of the cloister, dancing down among the wild herbage that filled the court, and rolling along the open arches and the paved floor with a noise and clatter that raised us in a moment into a state of the wildest excitement. Out we at once rushed into the court, with loud exclamations, heedless of the pelting of the hail, and picked up the stones, which seemed to get bigger every moment, ranging from the size of a walnut almost to that of an egg. One of us put up his umbrella, which was instantly perforated in two or three places, and reduced to a perfect wreck before he regained the cloister. The sight, indeed, was sublime in such a spot; the fury of the storm seemed to shake the edifice, and the torrents of hail threatened to dash in the slender gothic arches and delicate tracery; the thunder and lightning were fearful, and the exposed side of the cloister was inundated with a perfect deluge of rain. This continued for more than half an hour, when the sky partially cleared, and leaving our place of shelter we made a rush across the square and got into the cathedral. There we found every pane of glass that had not been secured with an external grating dashed in, and the whole pavement in a glitter with the fallen fragments; but this proved happily to be the extent of the mischief.

These hail-storms are common enough in Southern Europe, and are often much more considerable than the one we witnessed. Indeed, if we are to believe Benvenuto Cellini, whose tendency to exaggeration is, however, inveterate, they sometimes cause a fearful destruction of life as well as of property.

The interior of the cathedral of Pisa, though in a totally different style to our own, is equally solemn and imposing. The porphyry pillars, the black and white marbles with which the arches and walls are inlaid, the golden roof and mosaic pavement, combine to produce a most harmonious and im-

pressive effect, at once chaste and gorgeous, convincing the spectator how greatly the effect of architecture is heightened by the judicious employment of colour. After admiring, on the exterior of the cathedral, the bronze doors, for which the Pisan artificers were so famous that, as we shall hereafter see, their services were called into requisition to decorate the Norman cathedrals in Sicily, we completed our survey of this most interesting and remarkable group of buildings by visiting the Baptistery, which contains a very beautiful font, a masterpiece of sculpture for the period in which it was wrought.

We glanced, on our way back, at the Lung Arno and the palace occupied by Lord Byron, and after refreshing at a café, proceeded by the railroad to Florence. The country is rich and level, and fields of maize are enclosed with mulberry-trees, from one of which to another the vine with its rich clusters is gracefully festooned, a sight which, charming as it is for a while, at last becomes monotonous and tiresome. Traces of the storm were apparent in deluged fields and damaged corn, but its range had evidently been very partial, and as we drew near to Florence the setting sun shone forth from among the clouds with intense vividness of colour through the purified ether upon the domes and towers of the beautiful city. On entering the gates we were stopped by Austrian sentinels while our passports were being inspected. In rambling about, Austrian soldiers and officers are everywhere met with, all with high notions of their own importance, and ready to resent any fancied or involuntary slight on the part of natives or strangers, as the recent Mather case has pretty conclusively shown. In Italy it is impossible not to feel that the same chains with which the natives themselves are bound are to some extent thrown around the stranger also, that his free movements are impeded, his conduct is watched, and a tax levied on his time, purse, and patience, to support the machinery of despotism; and these irksome annoyances to himself, the subject of a free state, which so greatly interfere with the comfort

of travelling, show how complete must be the servitude to which the unfortunate Italians are themselves reduced. He cannot get rid of this painful conviction, the evidences of which he meets at every step, and the sense of moving about in fetters forms a serious drawback to the pleasure derived from a journey through this most poetical of lands.

The few hours allotted to us in the Tuscan capital, we resolved to divide between the city with its monuments, and the beauty of the surrounding country. From our comfortable quarters at the Hotel York, it was but a few steps to the Cathedral, Baptistery, and especially the Campanile of Giotto, about which so much has lately been written in a strain of rather overwrought enthusiasm by Mr. Ruskin. Accordingly, seated on the stone seat whence it is traditionally believed that Michael Angelo used to contemplate the cathedral, we pored a good half hour over what our famous architectural critic pronounces to be the very perfection of art, but in spite of every disposition to become a convert to his views, we could not feel that the *chef d'œuvre* of Giotto possessed the grandeur of some of our northern bell-towers, but with much unquestionable beauty of detail, with its superabundant elaboration and inlaid work, had somewhat too much the appearance of a huge porcelain toy. We absolutely dread to pronounce this fearful heresy in the face of such an authority, but such at all events was the idea gathered upon the spot, and we have since heard others make the same observation. Neither did the famous cathedral, with its vast plain sides of inlaid marble, and the baldness and heavy gloom of the interior, make an impression at all answerable to its enormous scale and celebrity, although the dome no doubt is a wonderful effort of constructive skill, and at a distance, like the campanile, a splendid ornament to the city.

But the bronze gates of the Baptistery—these indeed merit the enthusiastic encomium of Michael Angelo, that they were worthy to be the gates of Paradise. The fertility of fancy and the skill

of execution displayed in the endless combinations of fruit, flowers, birds, and figures, are certainly little less than miraculous. One may pore over them for half a day, and yet innumerable beauties escape observation.

Thence we went to the great square, where the sombre Ducal Palace, with its overhanging battlements and lofty tower, in the style of mediæval architecture peculiar to Florence, produces a sternly impressive effect, bringing back the period of intestine troubles and revolutions amidst which it was reared. The three round and graceful arches of the Podesta stand just below, under which are the bronze Perseus of Cellini, and other famous sculptures; while the colossal works of his rival Baccio Bandinelli adorn the front of the Ducal Palace. Besides their beauty, these celebrated works of art derive a double interest from the notices of them in the Life of Benvenuto Cellini, in which, himself and his own immeasurable vanity ever in the foreground, he gives us so lively a picture of the state of society in Florence, and of his own little world of famous artists in particular, with all its rivalries, its railings, its quarrels and its triumphs.

To walk the narrow and picturesque streets of Florence, especially on moonlight nights, is of itself a great enjoyment; it is to see history embodied in its characteristic monuments. The immense palaces of the principal merchant princes of the Medicean age, with their prison-like basements, pierced only by a single round-headed portal and a few grated windows, the iron rings through which to sling rich silks from the Orient; the elegant story above, containing the rooms of state, and the grand and ponderous cornices that overhang them, all tell of the times when they were reared, when amidst domestic feuds each house was at once a fortress, a warehouse, and a palace; and amidst these troublous elements the arts, newly revived, grew up to such splendid perfection by the fostering care of the Medici.

Of the galleries of Florence—a world in themselves—it would be folly to do more than say that we *saw* them, and carried away

a lasting impression of the original of those *chefs d'œuvre* of sculpture and painting, of which the untravelled reader may form some idea from the numerous casts and copies dispersed over Europe. We repaired to the famous chamber called the Tribune, to gaze upon "the statue that enchants the world," the famous Medicean Venus. We drank in the indescribable intoxication of a beauty in which there is nothing unrefined or gross; and in spite of the criticism of one of our party, who contended that the head was too small and the fingers too taper, we continued to gaze, and then return again with ever increasing fascination. Thus passed away the few hours of a morning into which were crowded more impressions of the greatness and variety of human genius than are sometimes gathered into a whole lifetime of the prosaic or the dull. Perfectly fatigued with admiration, we at length returned to the hotel, and after descending to the vulgar, but necessary, business of eating a very good dinner to repair the waste of the forenoon, (and those of the Hotel York are by no means to be despised,) we ordered a carriage to drive out as far as the hill of Fiesole.

The environs of Florence have been celebrated for their beauty. The city, with its group of domes and towers, stands in the broad valley of the Arno (in itself an insignificant muddy stream), bounded on either side by lofty romantic mountains. On a bold spur of one of these, forming part of the range of the Apennines, and about four miles from the city, stands Fiesole, an old city of Etruscan origin, and with its lofty campanile forming a conspicuous object in the landscape for many miles around. To this commanding position we now ascended by an excellent road, rising gradually as it neared the hills, and climbing to the steep crag on which the town stands by a succession of winding zigzags.

With the vivid recollection of the enjoyment of such a drive as this, one regrets how poor are words to convey even the least idea of it. Suffice it to say, that as we rose above the level of

the city, the whole valley lay outspread for miles beneath our eyes. Fertile as the richest district in England, it is perfectly unlike it in appearance, and yet no less beautiful; many who have not enjoyed the view from the Malvern or Cotswold hills, may, indeed, prefer it. The surface is one level and tufted green, like a carpet of velvet pile, interwoven of the bright fresh green of the corn and vine, the dark rich grey of the olive, and the black funereal cone of the cypress. White farmhouses and towers beautifully relieve this verdant level, and the windings of the Arno shine like silver in the distance.

But then the Apennines—I know not where there is anything in England to which they can be likened. Rising gradually and softly from the plain, they tower up in forms exquisitely graceful and undulating to a height of several thousand feet. Their summits are bare and brown, and their sides intersected with wild, romantic, solitary glens; but all the lower slopes are perfectly gemmed with villas and country-houses amidst their dark groves of cypress, olive, and fig, so numerous that, as the Florentine writers have boasted, if gathered together, they would far outnumber the buildings of the city itself.

At length, from the height of Fiesole, we commanded this prospect in its widest extent and most admirable combination. Florence and the Val d'Arno were at our feet; the very same landscape upon which our Milton, with a vivid recollection of its unequalled beauty, is said to have desired that his eyes might first open, should he be privileged to recover from his blindness. On the summit of a hill is an old convent, with a garden full of cypress-trees, and in front of this we reposed to see the sun set in a blaze of glory over fair Florence and its thousand villas, clothing the Apennines with a deeper purple, and touching the edges of the dark funereal cypresses with an intensely golden lustre. Had our great poet's wish been realized, it is at such a moment that he would have chosen to enjoy this spectacle—

"At evening, on the top of Fesole."

Twilight came on, and Dian's crescent hung over the towers of the city as we drove back between villas and gardens redolent with delicious perfume A moonlight stroll along the Arno and about the city closed a day in which art and nature seemed to have striven which could the most enchant us.

After all, it must be admitted that however splendid and poetical may be the general combinations of Italian landscape in detail, it is not half so enjoyable as that of our own beautiful country. You may stand upon a height like Fiesole and look over what appears to be an earthly paradise; but if you desire to cultivate a closer acquaintance with it, you speedily find yourself among a labyrinth of stony, dusty lanes, with high walls on either side, which cut off all view of the surrounding objects; or if you contrive to get clear of these obstacles, the surface of the country itself disappoints you. There are few trees larger than a dumpy olive, none of the luxurious massiveness and refreshing shadow of oak and elm; and after the first novelty is over, you get weary at last of eternal avenues of vineyards and formal rows of cypresses. The farm-houses are dirty, dreary places, devoid of that neatness and rural taste which give so great a charm even to an unpicturesque district in England. The rivers in central and southern Italy are mere scanty streams of yellow turbid water, rolling over a wide bed of sun-bleached stones, and in the hot season are often nearly dry. The opinion of Leigh Hunt may be here quoted: "There are no meadows, no proper green lanes (at least I saw none), no paths leading over field and style, no hay-fields in June, nothing of that luxurious combination of green and russet, of grass, wild flowers and woods, over which a lover of nature can stroll for hours with a foot as fresh as the stag's, unvexed with chalk, dust, and an eternal public path, and able to lie down, if he will, and sleep in clover. . . . . An Italian may prefer his own country after the same fashion, and he is right. I knew a young Englishwoman who, having grown up in Tuscany, thought the landscapes of

her native country insipid; and could not imagine how people could live without walks in vineyards. To me Italy has a certain hard taste in the mouth. Its mountains are too bare, its outlines are too sharp, its lanes too stony, its voices too loud, its long summer too dusty. I longed to bathe myself in the grassy balm of my native fields."

Fresh troubles awaited us on our return from Florence to Leghorn. The whole forenoon was consumed in a round of tiresome formalities, running after the signatures of the police and foreign consuls, without which the agents of the steamboat are forbidden to take passengers on board. It was with great exertion and some cost that we got through this business in time, and after a final scuffle with rival boatmen, who came to blows for the privilege of cheating us, we gladly rowed off to the French steamer, which did not, however, get under weigh till nearly sunset, having only to reach Civita Vecchia before morning.

Were it not for the never-ending annoyances and loss of time entailed upon the traveller by the passport system, nothing could be more delightful than this easy progress over the sunny azure of the Mediterranean. The voyage is so contrived that you generally arrive at some port in the morning and leave it in the evening, so that every day introduces you to fresh objects of interest. You see the sun rise and set, and are rarely long out of sight of land, and in the course of the voyage run along some of the most beautiful and memorable shores in the world. Add to this, excellent fare and accommodation, and generally agreeable society, and it will be readily conceived that in a fine summer few things can be pleasanter than a coasting voyage in the Mediterranean.

The coast of the Maremma from Leghorn to Civita Vecchia is however the dullest in all Italy, and one is not sorry to pass it in the night. Elba, the prison, as Ajaccio was the birthplace of Napoleon, is the only object of interest on the way. Civita

Vecchia has a dull and uninviting appearance as we approach, which is rather increased than diminished when the vessel casts anchor in the port itself, which is, however, somewhat enlivened by the constant arrival and departure of the steamers. After the first half-hour, every minute spent in Civita is a pure weariness, and whether on shore or on board, it is equally impossible to stave off *ennui*. The painter alone is an exception, who, in the antique buildings and light houses of the port, may obtain materials for a very picturesque and Claude-like composition. Here passengers for Rome disembark, and perform the journey of thirty or forty miles by land, an operation which, with passport and custom-house delays, generally consumes the best part of an entire day.

Joyfully did we hear the order to weigh anchor at sunset, and steam out of the harbour for Naples. We passed Ostia, formerly the port of Rome, in the dusk; and the Alban Mount, distant Campagna, and the dome of St. Peter's, objects which are visible by day, were lost to us in the haze of night. After passing the Circæan promontory, which stands out romantically into the sea, the dawn began to break, and we approached the Bay of Naples.

Every one who has travelled in Italy must have felt, that around the environs of this favoured city there hovers a certain indescribable and unearthly beauty—

> "An ampler ether—a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams;"

well answering to the Neapolitan description—"un pezzo di cielo caduto in terra,"—"a fragment of heaven dropped upon the earth." It was luxury to lean over the bow of the vessel and enjoy in silence the incomparable azure of the sea and sky, the looming up of the distant islands, clothed in the softest purple, and of the headland of Misenum with its lonely tower, which marks the entrance of the bay. As the light veil of mist

that hangs over the water is dissipated, and the rising sun discloses all the detail of romantic Ischia, its white towns rising among groves, and (though far otherwise) looking at a distance like the habitations of the blessed; the noble outline of Capri, standing at the entrance of the bay like a huge breakwater; and, as the prospect widens, the whole extent of that unrivalled bay, Baiæ and Pozzuoli on the left, Vesuvius and Sorrento upon the right, and in the hollow of the curve the city itself reposing on the margin of the water,—he seems to acquire a finer sense of beauty. It is like a new revelation of the surpassing glory with which Omnipotence can clothe the works of creation.

But on reaching the anchorage before Naples all such feelings are cut abruptly short. Exclamations of delight at the scenery are succeeded by anxious inquiries of—"How soon will the health officer come off?" "Are our passports *en règle*, and is there no indispensable signature which peradventure has been forgotten?" "Are the Custom-house people strict in their search; and have we any prohibited books which may expose our baggage to seizure?" After a long and wearisome delay, at length the health officer, in his boat with the yellow flag, comes off, and we are all mustered alongside to undergo his inspection. This over, we are all rowed to the passport office, and then to the Dogana, where the scene of uproar and confusion baffles all description. It was a most unlucky moment too, for the excitement of the famous Gladstone Letters, exposing the cruelties of the Neapolitan government, was at its height, and vigorous search was made for these pernicious pamphlets, the dissemination of which was regarded with absolute terror by the authorities. After the closest scrutiny none of them were forthcoming, but certain numbers of the "Revue de Paris," which had amused my leisure on the voyage, were dragged forward with the air of a discovery. In vain I urged that they were the very reverse of revolutionary, and that there was not a syllable

about Naples in them; they were inexorably carried off for the inspection of the police, with the understanding that, if they were found to contain nothing suspicious, they would be returned, on application, in the course of two or three days. It should be observed that it is at all times necessary to have a separate passport in order to visit Sicily from Naples.

This immense city is almost divided in half by the Strada Toledo, the principal thoroughfare, a long avenue running up from the bay, and at one end of which stands the Royal Palace. To the north of this street extends the aristocratic quarter—the resort of pleasure seekers and valetudinarians from every clime, where everything breathes of idlesse, amusement and luxury. In strong and painful contrast with this is the southern portion of the city—the abode of the lower classes, of which but few travellers care to penetrate the recesses. At first sight Naples may seem the most fascinating residence upon the face of the earth; but the low aspect of human nature displayed by its population,—lively, mercurial and good-natured, yet ignorant, superstitious and ferocious,—and the degrading tyranny of the Government, fostering the basest qualities as it depresses the noblest, cast a mournful gloom over the scene, and to those who cannot shut themselves up in selfish luxury and dilettantism, the most exquisite natural beauty seems only to render more painful by contrast the moral degradation of those who dwell in the midst of it.

The boat left for Palermo on the second day, and as time did not admit of our devoting two separate days to visit Vesuvius and Pompeii, we resolved to combine the two by crossing the mountain and walking the rest of the way; so, laying in a stock of provisions, we hired a vehicle to Torre del Greco, at which place we were to take donkeys to the foot of the crater.

Our way lay along the sea shore, through the noisiest quarter of Naples, and of what that is nothing but experience can convey an adequate idea. The noise of London is caused by the mono-

tonous roar of thousands of vehicles incessantly rolling over the pavement; the sound of the human voice seems rarely heard. But here it is the very reverse. To hear for the first time the confused babble of innumerable voices which arises from Naples, you would suppose that it could be caused by nothing less than a general insurrection. The most ordinary transaction is accompanied by an infinity of passionate outcries, ludicrous superlatives, and almost frenzied gesticulation. The voice is pitched in a high shrill note, which the least excitement exalts into a downright scream, and the Neapolitan is thrown into a state of excitement even upon the most trivial cause. Where that is wanting I have heard them yell for the mere pleasure of exercising the lungs. Clamour, in short, is to this people a necessary of existence. In this climate, moreover, among the poorer classes, half the avocations of life are carried on almost or wholly in the street, where they work at their respective trades, cook, wash, eat, scold, fight, and perform almost all the suggestions of appetite and the functions of nature, in the sight of every passenger. Such a burrow of filth as the lower quarter of Naples is hardly to be paralleled elsewhere—the fry of its population may be likened to the maggots with which a decayed cheese is all in a ferment—as nasty, as closely packed, as busy, and as happy.

> "With life the streets o'erflow, exuberant
> As is their soil. There, ranged, the gaudy stalls
> Well piled with fruit, and glittering traffic, plant
> Their motley ensigns—Pulcinello calls
> His faithful votaries—Cappucini chant
> Their Lady's hymn—Calabria's bagpipe squalls—
> Monks rant—empirics bawl—in pilgrim weeds
> The bandit tells his plunder with his beads!"

For miles on the road to Pompeii, which runs along the margin of the bay, it is a crowded suburb. Hundreds of *curricoli*, a high-pitched gig, very loosely hung, meant to hold two or

three persons, but which, like an Irish car, accommodates as many as can by any means hold on, and as the horse can be *persuaded* to carry, rattle along the paved causeway, amidst a continual whirl of dust and babel of tongues, which accompanied us all the way to Torre del Greco.

Here we fell into the hands of the donkey drivers, and struck off from the main road, pursuing our way towards the summit of the mountain, which, beautiful as it is at a distance, now assumed a dreary rugged appearance. Its flanks are deeply indented, and covered with black ashy coloured beds of lava, through which we picked our toilsome way, until we reached a point where it was necessary to dismount and clamber on foot to the summit, over a wilderness of huge lava blocks, so sharp and jagged that the greatest care was required to avoid falling and cutting ourselves. But this last ordeal was soon passed, and without any exertion worth naming we stood upon the brink of the crater. And truly the scene around us was one never to be forgotten; and if it possessed less of the awfully sublime than when the mountain is in a state of eruption, we were certainly better able to appreciate, undisturbed, its striking contrasts and extraordinary loveliness.

The spot we stood on, near the edge of the crater, was a perfect mass of yellow sulphur, veined with white, and so heated that we could with difficulty keep on the same spot for more than a few moments; and, to give further evidence of its heat, our guide immediately set to work and roasted some eggs for us on the ground. From this uneasy post upon "the burning marle," the eye plunged sheer down into the awful abyss of the crater, a perfect circle, its sides scorched and blasted by the action of fire, and coloured alternately in black, red, and yellow veins. At the very bottom was a large round opening, like the entrance to the infernal regions, from which a clear flame of the most intense and vivid fire was constantly boiling, throwing off enormous clouds of smoke, which eddying and boiling round the hollow of

the crater, rose over its edge in a tall and awful column, which, after many convolutions, was at length dissipated in the sky. Sometimes, caught by the wind, the sulphurous mass was carried near the spot where we stood, threatening to half suffocate us, and compelling us to make a hasty retreat. From the crater, the flank of the mountain we had been climbing sunk to the edge of the bay; and looking down it we could trace the lava beds, till lost among the rich vineyards and white towns which still continue, such is the quickening fertility of the soil, to maintain their precarious position along the shore, at the foot of the slumbering volcano.

But if everything about the mountain savours of the infernal, the region over which we looked from its scorching brow may truly be called "un pezzo de cielo," a fragment of paradisaical beauty. The graceful curve of the bay, a sheet of soft but intense azure, dotted with white sails; the long winding shore as far as Naples, gay with suburbs; the hills of Pausilipo covered with villas; the distant inlet of Baiæ; the islands of Ischia and Capri; the bold headlands of Sorrento; the far-distant sea, extending away towards Mola;—this unequalled combination of objects, so varied in outline, so exquisite in colour, and o'ercanopied by an atmosphere so pure, a sky so lucid and transparent, that the lungs seem to expand with delight in breathing it;—such is the view that lay outstretched before us from the summit of Vesuvius.

We had now to descend the mountain upon the side facing Pompeii, opposite to that by which we came up, and utterly unlike it, being, in fact, a long and steep inclined plane of deep loose volcanic dust, without a single block of lava or impediment whatsoever; so that we might have rolled a ball nearly from the top to the bottom. By the guide's direction, we therefore adopted a suitable style of descent. Driving his heels into the sand, and leaning back to preserve his equilibrium, he darted forwards, or rather downwards, at railroad speed, disappearing

amidst a cloud of dust, which seemed to roll after him down the side of the mountain. A moment's hesitation, and we dashed after him in like manner, and speedily found that once committed to the descent, it required the utmost exertion of the muscles, like those of an unhappy victim on the treadmill, or the traveller when the bottom of the chaise fell out, and he had to run for his life, to keep on with unfaltering velocity and increasing momentum to the goal. A single pause or hitch in the flying descent, and we should have flung off at a tangent, head over heels, performing endless gyrations and summersets, till abruptly pulled up by the first obstacle to our headlong career, with the breath beaten out of our bodies.

Tremendous was the excitement of the race. Our coat-tails flew out behind; our hair streamed in the wind; our straw hats, threatening to take flight, were wildly grasped by one hand, while with the other we controlled our movements as with a rudder; our legs going like the strokes of a piston; and our lungs in a perfect roar of laughter: albeit half-suffocated with the dust of our own raising, we happily achieved the descent without a single trip or tumble, in a space of time which seemed quite ridiculous compared to that which it had taken us to climb up.

The worst pull now remained, in the shape of a noontide walk to Pompeii through the vineyards and over a volcanic soil reverberating the rays of the sun. The heat was intense; and though suffering from thirst, we had no means of obtaining refreshment, and were well-nigh exhausted when we espied the lofty mounds of dust, overgrown with vineyards and foliage, which cover the buried city. Shortly afterwards we stretched ourselves in the shade of the trees at the entrance of the Street of Tombs.

Much of the impressiveness of a place like Pompeii is often lost by the mode in which it is visited. People come in large parties from Naples, furnished with luxurious luncheons, washed down with Lachrymæ Christi and Champagne, which somehow

they generally prefer to imbibe before going over the place, and amidst the hilarious excitement consequent on these indulgences, they see Pompeii indeed, but do not *feel* the lifeless melancholy of the excavated city. I had visited the place before in this way, and most unsatisfactorily; but now there was nothing to disturb the powerful impression which when seen alone, or almost alone, it invariably leaves upon the mind. Coming so recently from the noise and turbulence of Naples, the corpse-like stillness of its streets and roofless houses, undisturbed at that moment but by our own echoing footsteps, or by the rustle of the lizard across the pavement, fell on us with a strange haunting sense of dreariness, deepened by the bland soft air, laden with perfume, which blew in from the neighbouring mountains upon the vacant streets. Our guide led us over the theatres, up and down the public ways, and into the deepest recesses of the baths and private dwellings; through the Forum and its temples, then to the Amphitheatre, and lastly to the Street of Tombs and the Villa of Diomede,—perhaps the most impressive of the many objects of interest with which Pompeii abounds. It would be useless here to describe these in detail, what every one is more or less familiar with through endless publications, from the most costly folio to the excellent shilling duodecimo of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. To convey a few general ideas is the utmost that can be attempted; and I know not how to do this better than by substituting for my halting prose a few stanzas from a poem, not so widely circulated as it deserves to be, which, like those of Byron in Childe Harold, concentrate, as it were, the essence of descriptive poetry, and leave behind a more lasting impression than folios of elaborate details.

> But lo! the disentomb'd POMPEIA! Here
> Before me—in her pall of ashes spread,
> Wrench'd from the gulf of ages—she whose bier
> Was the embowell'd mountain, lifts her head,

Sad, but not silent! Thrilling in my ear,
She tells her tale of horror, till the dread
And sudden tempest, mustering in the air,
Seems to recal the day of her despair!

Joyful she feasted 'neath her olive-tree,
Then rose to dance and play: and, if a cloud
O'ershadow'd her throng'd circus, who could see
The impending deluge brooding in its shroud?
On went the games! mirth and festivity
Increased—prevail'd: till rendingly and loud,
The earth and sky, with consentaneous roar,
Announced her doom—that time should be no more.

Shook to its centre, the convulsive soil
Closed round the flying; Sarno's tortured tide
O'erleapt its banks, impatient for its spoil!
Thick darkness fell; and wasting far and wide,
Wrath open'd her dread flood-gates! Brief the toil
And terror of resistance: art supplied
No subterfuge—the pillar'd crypt and cave
That proffer'd shelter, proved a living grave!

Within the circus, tribunal, and shrine,
Shrieking they perish'd. There the usurer sank,
Grasping his gold,—the bacchant at his wine,—
The gambler at his dice! age, sex, nor rank,
From all they loved, revered, or deem'd divine,
Found help or rescue; unredeem'd they drank
Their cup of horror to the dregs, and fell
With heaven's avenging thunders for their knell.

Their city a vast sepulchre—each hearth
A charnel-house! The beautiful and brave—
Whose high exploits, whose classic charms gave birth
To songs and civic wreaths—unheeded crave
A pause 'twixt life and death: no hand on earth,
No voice from heaven, replies to close the grave
Yawning around them. Still the burning shower
Rains down upon them with unslackening power!

'Tis an old tale—yet gazing thus, it seems
But yesterday the circling wine-cup went
Its joyous round! Here still the altar gleams;
New guests arrive; the reveller sits intent
At his carousal, quaffing to the themes
Of Thracian Orpheus; still the cups indent
The conscious marble, and the amphoræ still
Seem redolent of old Falerno's hill!

It seems but yesterday! Half-sculptured, there,
On the paved forum wedged, the marble shaft
Waits but the workman to resume his care,
And reed it by the cunning of his craft.
The chips, struck from his chisel, fresh and fair,
Lie scatter'd round; th' acanthus leaves ingraft
The half-wrought capital; and Isis' shrine
Retains untouch'd her implements divine.

The streets are hollow'd by the rolling car
In sinuous furrows; there the lava stone
Retains, deep grooved, the frequent axle's scar.
Here oft the pageant pass'd, and triumph shone;
Here warriors bore the glittering spoils of war,
And met the full, fair city smiling on
With wreath and pæan—gay as those who drink
The draught of pleasure on destruction's brink!

The frescoed wall, the rich mosaic floor,
Elaborate, fresh, and garlanded with flowers
Of ancient fable: crypt and lintell'd door,
Writ with the name of their last tenant; towers
That still in strength aspire, as when they bore
Their Roman standard, from the whelming shower
That form'd their grave, return, like spectres risen,
To solve the mysteries of their fearful prison!

And lo, the "street of sepulchres," where bust,
And scroll, and epicede, and cenotaph,
And urns with pristine ashes—human dust
Which that dread day, that turn'd their fields to chaff,
Their city to a shroud, spared in its crust
Inviolate; while their wretched children—half
Of that fair province, blasted in their pride,
Sank down unwept, unmonumented died!

And here the living, while erecting tombs
To shrine ancestral dust, left off their toil
To fill their own! Where now the citron blooms,
And fig-trees flourish—sifted from the spoil
Of centuries—the mattock still exhumes
Their urnless relics; where the sacred oil
Was never sprinkled; where the pious tear
Of kindred sorrow never reach'd their bier![1]

This description is as poetically beautiful as it is literally exact, and it is but little that we shall venture to add to it. What always surprises the visitor is the small scale of everything at Pompeii. The streets are very narrow, but have a high raised foot-pavement, and two or three large stepping-stones at the crossings to enable the passenger to pass over dry-shod during rains. The shops and ordinary dwellings are of the most minute dimensions—literally too small "to swing a cat in,"—and one is puzzled how the inhabitants could have stowed themselves away. Even the dwellings of the wealthier inhabitants are on a very limited scale; but then it is surprising how elegantly that small space is disposed. As in eastern countries, there is generally an open court, with a fountain, and a shady portico around it, which was probably the general place of resort for the family, besides one or two inner chambers,—the bed-rooms being mere nooks and niches. The floors are everywhere inlaid with beautiful mosaic, at once cool and ornamental; the walls adorned with frescoes, which display both the love of art and the corruption of morals with which society was pervaded.

A striking scene is the Forum, the heart of the city, and the great lounging-place of the inhabitants; extensive, and unlike the streets, very open, with an area surrounded by shady porticoes. The principal temples and the tribunal of justice opened upon it. If we climb an angle of one of these buildings, and look

[1] "The Pilgrim in Italy." By William Beattie, M.D. Canto ii. p. 46.

down upon all this as upon a ground-plan,—these temples and porticoes being all roofless, though the pillars are standing,—it is not difficult to repeople this vast and vacant space with all the mingled population of the city—patricians, plebeians, priests, senators, loungers, who were wont to congregate in the shade of its pillared corridors.

Still more impressive is the great Amphitheatre, where it is generally supposed the people were assembled at the very moment of the eruption. It is an immense oval, capable of accommodating many thousand spectators, and is still in a very good state of preservation. From the topmost bench there is a wide view over the bay and its shores; while Vesuvius looms up black and threatening in the background. Hence the catastrophe comes vividly home to the imagination:—the mountain belching forth the torrents of lava that engulfed Herculaneum—the air black with the ashes that buried Pompeii—the horror and consternation of the inhabitants, hurrying down amidst the suffocating dust to the shore of the bay, to seek for safety in flight, at the same time that Pliny, crossing over from the distant shore of Baiæ, perishes among the obscure crowd of fugitives;—it is impossible to stand here, and not to realize the terrible drama, the scene of which is so clearly unrolled around.

But nowhere does it come home more painfully to the mind than in the dark underground vaults of the Villa of Diomede, where the very impress of the bodies of those who, taking shelter from the burning shower, as the hot dust penetrated deeper and deeper into its recesses, were there blocked up and suffocated, may still be seen upon the ash-encrusted wall.

On our way back we paused a while at Portici, to descend into the subterranean excavations of Herculaneum. A guide, bearing a torch, piloted us down a rugged pathway cut through the lava, to the theatre, some few seats of which appear half excavated in the solid mass. Onward we followed him along vaults and corridors dimly revealed by the flickering torch-light:

but the excavated portion of Herculaneum is, for an obvious reason, nothing compared with that of Pompeii.

> "The ashes' hold man's labour can unclasp,
> But scarce may loose the lava's iron grasp."

To borrow another of Dr. Beattie's expressive stanzas,—

> "Further and darker, where the pickaxe cleaves
> A path, ghost-like the city, with her gods
> Glued by the lava to their shrines, receives
> My faltering step. In chambers once the abode
> Of life and sunshine,—where the bronze still heaves
> With human likeness,—lo, the miner plods
> With torch and mattock; and, discoursing, shows
> The hoarded fragments of Heraclea's woes!"

The ride back to Naples was glorious. The sun set over the bay, and when the twilight came on, the long curving line of lamps glancing for miles along its shores, and scattered up the hill sides, produced a most magical effect. Every shrine of the Virgin had its lamp lighted; and on peeping into little shops and houses, the same figure appeared presiding over the interior of the household. On reaching our inn we found a grand festa in full operation close at hand. A scaffolding was built up against a dead wall, in the centre of which had been inserted an extempore shrine glittering with gold and spangles, and in the midst a waxen image of the Virgin, which would have been pronounced a "love of a doll" by a girl of ten years old. A band of musicians was ranged alongside on the benches, braying forth a very noisy if not melodious concerto. There was a band of military provided by a paternal government, who ever and anon poured forth a tremendous roar of musketry; while the street was all in a blaze with variegated lamps, and a superb discharge of fireworks formed the climax of the spectacle.

The people crowded the street with the eagerness of children at a fair; while a band of friars was engaged in turning the

affair to account by vending a life of the Virgin for one or two *grana*. Such is religion in Naples, and it may reasonably be doubted whether such a people are capable of comprehending any other. The worst side of it is, the power that the blind fanaticism of the ignorant mass gives to a priesthood, who are the natural allies of a despotic government.

The strangest thing is, to hear the Neapolitans, the votaries of St. Januarius, who can swallow the annual miracle of the liquefaction of his blood without hesitation or misgiving, exclaim against the Sicilians for their superstition: yet this I have actually heard them do. One gentleman at the table-d'hôte was particularly indignant, that instead of those wooden images of the Saviour on the cross, painted to imitate life, which are everywhere put up in Italy, he knew an instance of the Sicilians hiring an unfortunate individual to personate the dying Saviour, and submit to be fastened up with cords and bedaubed with blood, so as to impress the feelings of the vulgar with the liveliest sense of reality. Whilst this wretched hireling—as he declared—was writhing about in his uneasy predicament, a poor old woman (with that confusion of ideas between the real object and its representation which leads the Italians to address an image of the Virgin as though the original were before them) knelt down before him, and deeply affected by so moving a representation, continued to detail a long catalogue of domestic calamities, and pour forth such passionate entreaties for succour, that the patience of the poor devil to whom her prayers were addressed could hold out no longer, and he electrified the old woman with a sudden explosion of oaths and curses. "Idiot that you are," he exclaimed, "can you not see that I am strung up here against my will, and strained and tortured until every nerve in my body is ready to crack with pain; and here you worry me with a host of petitions which, you know, I can no more grant than I can help myself down from this accursed cross! Off with you, old fool, and take your paltry grievances to the nearest

Madonna." Whether this story is true or false, it will serve at least to show the contempt and dislike the Neapolitans bear towards the Sicilians; a feeling which is more than reciprocated by the latter people, in consequence of their enforced incorporation with their neighbours, under the grinding tyranny of the King of Naples, the monopoly of the chief offices in the island by Neapolitans, and the presence of a body of Neapolitan troops, intended to overawe and enslave them. This feeling of rooted dislike must be reckoned as one of the greatest difficulties in combining Naples and Sicily under a single government.

CHAPTER II.

APPROACH TO SICILY FROM NAPLES—STROMBOLI—SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS—MESSINA—TAORMINA—ACI AND THE CYCLOPEAN ISLANDS.

ONE reason, perhaps, why so few people care to visit Sicily, is to be found in the exquisite fascinations of Naples and its environs. By the time they have looked down upon that unrivalled bay from the summit of Vesuvius, explored Sorrento, Amalfi, and Baiæ, walked through the deserted streets of Pompeii, sailed about the romantic islands of Ischia and Capri, earth has nothing more lovely to show, and enthusiasm is pretty well exhausted. It requires more than average curiosity to go in quest of scenes which, if they present some points of novelty, cannot be more beautiful than those already around us.

Having, nevertheless, undertaken to conduct the traveller into Sicily, we shall at once suppose him on board one of the French steamers, which leaving Naples every ten days, keep up the communication with Messina and Malta. In fine weather this is a most delightful run, along the shores of the bay, past Capri, and in sight of the rugged mountains of Calabria. After a run of four-and-twenty hours the shores of Sicily begin to loom up gradually to the southward.

As they come faintly into view, the bold and striking group of the Lipari Islands stands out in front of them like so many giant sentinels. Right on our course is Stromboli, the easternmost of these islands, a lofty volcanic cone rising out of the sea in isolated grandeur, apparently quite given up to desolation, but with a small town and a sprinkling of cultivation upon its rugged flanks.

Those who have ascended to the crater, speak of it as a far more toilsome and difficult undertaking than to climb either Etna or Vesuvius; but the view from it is surprisingly grand, with the deep crater below, and the sea almost beating at one's feet. The effect of this "lone volcanic isle," when belching forth fire and flame as from below the depths of the ocean, is so awfully grand, as to have associated it in the popular mind with the idea of the bottomless pit. "Superstition," says Smythe, "is not idle with respect to this wonderful abyss; and even Pope Gregory I. seriously believed it to be the abode of the damned! Here Theodoric the great Ostrogoth, despite of his virtues, was plunged by the ministers of divine vengeance on earth; while William the Bad of Sicily and poor Henry VIII. of England have both been detected endeavouring to make their escape from this fiery caldron. An eminent contractor of biscuit for the supply of the British navy is supposed, among English sailors, to be in durance there, and by a remarkable trial at Doctors' Commons about seventy or eighty years ago, the judge in his decision seemed to acquiesce in the opinion of his being consigned to its domains for ever. The culprit was a Mr. B——. I have forgotten the name, but I can never lose the remembrance of the effect that reading this trial from the *Naval Chronicle* had on a naval audience while passing the island."

Lord Byron, on his fatal voyage from Genoa to Greece, sailed past Stromboli; and it is not improbable that the recollection of it suggested to him the striking image in his last poem written not many months after, in which the desolation of his soul is depicted with such painful vividness:—

> "The fire that in my bosom preys
> Is like to some volcanic isle;
> No torch is kindled at its rays,—
> A funeral pile."

Stromboli left behind, we soon enter the mouth of the Faro. On the left, the abrupt rock of Scylla projects into the sea,—a

spur of the rugged mountains of Calabria, which rise from the margin of the strait to an almost alpine elevation. On the other side are the sunny fruitful hills of Sicily. Cape Pelorus, the extreme point of the island, recals the memory of Hannibal's pilot, whom he is said to have put to death on suspicion of treachery, from finding that he was about to take his ships through the Faro, and to whose memory, in remorse, he afterwards erected a temple on the spot. There is no doubt, however, that it was a common thoroughfare in the time of the Romans. The channel is here about six thousand yards across, but gradually winding towards Messina, which speedily appears in sight, with its white buildings gracefully lining the shore. The perils of the Faro were depicted by the ancient poets, everybody knows, as fearful in the extreme; but on this point "a modern naval authority well remarks, that as the Athenians and Syracusans, as well as Locrians and Rhegians, did not hesitate to fight in it, it could not have been considered so fearfully horrible by ancient sailors as it was by ancient poets."

Immediately without the projecting point of land which encloses the port of Messina, is the famous whirlpool of Charybdis, formed probably by the meeting of the two currents of the strait and the harbour. It is from seventy to ninety fathom deep. It presents a pool of curling eddies sufficiently powerful to whirl round a seventy-four gun ship, and, of course, enough to endanger the safety of the small undecked vessels of the ancients.

As soon as it is passed, the spacious harbour of Messina opens to view. The general effect is very striking. A curving line of noble palaces borders the shore, the effect of which, however, is sadly marred by finding a large portion of them only one story high, as they were left unfinished in consequence of the earthquakes which have ravaged the city. The broad and noble quay, decorated with a fine statue of Neptune, is lined with shipping from all parts of Europe and America; the foreign

trade of Messina, which, however, is principally in the hands of strangers, being very considerable. Overlooking this quay was the principal hotel, the Gran Bretagna, a spacious and handsome building, but very dirty and carelessly kept.

The splendid commercial situation of Messina has caused it to subsist and flourish in spite of the calamities of all descriptions with which it has so often been visited. During my visit the papers were taken up by accounts of the recent terrible earthquake in Calabria, which had totally destroyed the city of Melfi, and buried in the ruins several hundreds, or as popular rumour perhaps more correctly imagined, thousands of the inhabitants. "Messina," to quote a popular account of these disasters, "being situated between Mount Etna and the Gulf of Charybdis, and being likewise at no great distance from the volcanoes of Lipari and Stromboli, must have been in all ages liable to suffer from earthquakes. Such terrible events, however, appear to have been more unfrequent in ancient than in modern times, and have alarmed the present age oftener than any other. In the year 1693, a fourth part of the cities of Sicily was destroyed by an earthquake. Messina merely felt the shock; all its buildings, however, suffered. In the year 1742 it suffered another equally violent. The plague which followed in 1743, retarded the repairs necessary after the earthquake. In the year 1780, this city continued for more than six months to suffer from new earthquakes. The autumn of the year 1782 was unusually cold and rainy; Fahrenheit's thermometer was often as low as 56 degrees. The succeeding winter was dry; and the mercury never fell under 55 degrees; and, what is uncommon in that season, storms were now and then observed to rise from the west: the pilots in the channel observed that the tides no longer rose at the usual periods, and the Gulf of Charybdis raged with extraordinary fury.

On the 5th of February, 1783, the air was heavy and calm; the sky obscured with thick clouds, and the atmosphere seem-

ingly all in a flame. About half after twelve at noon, the earth began to shake with a dreadful noise. The shocks continually increased, and became at length so violent as to open the ground, and to overturn in two or three minutes a considerable part of the buildings. A long white cloud appeared to the north-west, and soon after another very dark in the same quarter of the heavens. The latter in a moment spread over the whole horizon, and deluged the city with rain and hail, accompanied with dreadful claps of thunder. The inhabitants fled in the utmost terror to the fields and the ships in the harbour. From mid-day till five in the afternoon, the earthquake continued almost without interruption. The shocks then became somewhat less frequent. The cries of the dying; the shrieks of those who were half-buried under the ruins; the wild terror with which others, who were still able, attempted to make their escape; the despair of fathers, mothers, and husbands, bereft of those who were dearest to them,—these formed altogether a scene of horror such as can but seldom occur in the history of the calamities of the human race. Amid that fearful scene, instances of the most heroic courage and of the most generous affection were displayed. Mothers, regardless of their own safety, rushed into every danger to snatch their children from death. Conjugal and filial affection prompted deeds not less desperate and heroic. But no sooner did the earthquake cease than the poor wretches who had escaped began to feel the influence of very different passions. When they returned to visit the ruins, to seek out the situation of their fallen dwellings, to inquire into the fate of their families, to procure food and collect some remains of their former fortunes, such as found their circumstances the most wretched became suddenly animated with rage, which nothing but wild despair could inspire. The distinction of ranks and the order of society were disregarded, and property eagerly violated. Murder, rapine, and lawless robbery reigned among the smoking ruins. . . . . The

disastrous year of the earthquake was scarcely concluded, the chasms which it had opened in the ground were still yawning, and the poor inhabitants of the adjacent country still trembled with terror, when the elements again renewed their fury to ravage this miserable land. On Tuesday, the 6th January, 1784, about sunrise, the wind began to blow softly from the north-east. The sea gradually swelled, rose above its bed with rapid impetuosity, overflowed the quay of Messina, and lashed with its billows the ruins of the Palazzata. It loosened and displaced many of the stones of the mole, spread over the whole street, and attacked the pedestals of the statues which had been spared by the earthquake and still stood firm among the ruins. The same furious wind which swelled the sea in so extraordinary a manner, ravaged the whole coast from Messina all the way to Syracuse.

During this present year, 1852, Messina has been again thrown into the greatest consternation. In the month of January the shocks of earthquake were extremely frequent, but their number and degree increased to a frightful extent on the night of the 26th of February, when the whole population stayed out of doors for fear of the houses falling in. Some old inhabitants, who still recollect those of the 5th of February, 1783, related that the shocks commenced a month before in the same manner, and at last ended in the total destruction of the town. We trust, however, that these fearful anticipations are not destined to be realized.

Although the commercial activity of Messina speedily effaces the ravages of earthquake or of war, and its streets are full of their wonted activity, there yet remain dismal traces of the last cruel bombardment in 1848, by which the King of Naples has raised to the highest pitch the aversion with which he was previously regarded by the Sicilians. Notwithstanding the protest of Lord Napier against the further prosecution of hostilities, which "could only increase the permanent exasperation of parties already

unreasonably inflamed, and the close of every avenue to ultimate reconciliation," the Neapolitan Government, on finding that the English and French forces intended to remain neutral, resolved to reduce Messina by force. Accordingly, on August 30th, a flotilla left Naples with a body of troops, and having landed them, the city was bombarded from the citadel with the utmost fury. The Messinese offered a most heroic defence. "The courage of the populace," says Lord Napier, "had risen to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that it was impossible to witness their efforts without deep emotion and sympathy. The streets were barricaded and mined, and all ranks and classes of either sex seemed animated by an equal spirit of resistance, and prepared to die under the ruins." The foreign consuls protested earnestly against the destruction of this beautiful city, and the short notice given them to remove their respective countrymen. For two days the insurgents sustained the overwhelming attack of a superior power, till the town was set in flames, and the French and English ships were crowded with unhappy fugitives. At length the Sicilian batteries were silenced and all opposition at an end, yet *for eight hours after*, the Neapolitans still continued the bombardment, indicating, as Admiral Sir William Parker observed in his dispatch, "ferocity to which a parallel can scarcely be found in the records of civilized warfare." The Neapolitan troops now entered the desolated city, "burning whole streets, and committing the most unheard-of ravages." Some of the details of their cruelties are really too horrible to be cited. The French and English Admirals, who, owing to the neutrality imposed upon them, had reluctantly stood aloof without venturing to interfere, unable any longer to witness such a scene of horror, now imperatively demanded, in the name of humanity, a cessation of hostilities until negotiations could be set on foot, a demand with which the Neapolitans were reluctantly obliged to comply. After bestowing upon the Messinese these proofs of his kindness and tender mercies, the

Neapolitan Governor issued a proclamation, declaring "that his Majesty our lord the king, like a loving father of his people, forgets their past errors, in the certain persuasion that his Sicilian subjects will from henceforward return to that devoted and faithful attachment to his sacred person which has always endeared them to his heart." Could he but hear the "curses not loud but deep," the dark threats of another "Vespers" muttered in secret by those who dare not give their wrongs a voice, he would form some idea of the manner in which this hateful mingling of cruelty and hypocrisy is preparing another convulsion at no distant day.

Although Messina is not the capital of the island, yet, owing to its more frequent and easy communication with the continent and Malta, and to the number of foreign merchants settled there, and of vessels constantly arriving and departing, there is a greater activity and life, a more cosmopolitan tone of feeling, and a greater circulation of ideas, than anywhere else in Sicily. Business is here the predominant element, the streets and shops are crowded, and with more liberal arrangements, its commercial consequence could not fail largely to increase. But the King of Naples is principally busied in riveting the chains by which he maintains a precarious hold on a people by whom he is detested. The citadel has been strengthened, and fresh regiments of mercenary Swiss sent over, the only reliable troops in case of a sudden insurrection. To study the interests and conciliate the feelings of the people is generally the last object of despotic governments, and what they have obtained by force alone, by force alone they still continue to maintain.

To see the beautiful quay of Messina at sunset, one might not suppose that any secret discontent was brooding among the people. Gay equipages and gallant cavaliers dash past; a crowd of pedestrians press along, hurrying to take their evening walk along the fine road which borders the northern shore of the strait. The sea-breeze blows in fresh and bracing; the opposite

mountains of Calabria, with the deep ravines and snow-topped peaks, are dyed in the gorgeous red of a southern sunset, which slowly fades away, till they stand grey and awful in the twilight, and the rising moon begins to show upon the Faro, and tinge the vessels working up and down the channel with fitful gleams of light. It is the hour of enjoyment in the warm south: the artificer, his work over, inhaling the freshness, sits at his open door, while his children play in the street; old gossips, ranged along the wall, indulge in their most intimate communications; the young people walk abroad, conversing in hushed breath, in an atmosphere that breathes of love; cafés and ice-shops are filled; everything seems given up to quiet luxurious enjoyment. But the invisible presence of despotism is there like a blight; the spy is plying his dirty work abroad; and of those who walk forth amidst their friends or children in the twilight, perhaps some one before the following morning is doomed, for a thoughtless word or even on mere suspicion, to be dragged from his bed and thrown into a dungeon. It was not unusual, I was told, for members of families who knew that they lay under the ban of the authorities, to wish each other good night with peculiar solemnity, as uncertain whether the next day might behold them assembled together.

Dark and hollow as political and social life may be, the face of nature is smiling as ever in Sicily. The environs are lovely and exuberantly fruitful, and no one should fail to ascend the neighbouring mountain, which commands a sublime view of the whole length of the straits, the city, and the northern coast. The first part of the ascent should be made on the back of a donkey, which may readily be obtained near the hotel; the latter, being very steep, is best performed on foot. The best way to return is by the telegraph station, on the carriage-road to Palermo, near which the annexed view is taken. Here the *sickle*-form of the tongue of land enclosing the harbour, whence the Greeks gave to it the name *Zankle*, is well seen, as well as the

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MESSINA AND THE FARO.

character of the environs, composed of innumerable conical hills and deep ravines, the Calabrian mountains forming a sublime background.

From this spot, too, a magnificent view is obtained of the Lipari Islands, from Stromboli to Alicuri, exhibiting in their wildly abrupt and varied outline every variety of volcanic formation. At a distance they appear too rugged to be inhabited, but they contain, nevertheless, several towns and a considerable population. These wild fantastic-looking rocks, starting from the sea, were supposed by the ancients, says Smythe, to be the chimneys of a vast subterranean cavity, inhabited by Steropes, Brontes, and Arges; while the caverns in which Æolus imprisoned the winds were in this archipelago of fires. Here also Diana was placed by Latona in her infancy. Here Vulcan forged the thunderbolts of Jupiter; and here the sooty Brontes embraced a rainbow instead of the Queen of Chastity. Passing from these mythical fables to something like well-grounded fact, it would appear that Liparus, son of Auson, passed over from Italy and built the city bearing his name. Æolus arrived and married his daughter; and from his knowledge of meteorology and predictions of the winds and weather, the popular belief is supposed to have arisen. He also supposes Panaria to be the lost Euonymus of Plato.

The monuments of Messina are not of any special interest. Of the Greek and Saracenic period nothing remains. The cathedral is of mixed style, part having been commenced by King Roger. It is basilica-shaped, with three apses having mosaics, but of far less interest than the cathedrals of Cefalu and Monreale, in the same style. The original roof, burnt by accident, was afterwards replaced. It contains no pictures of any mark. The west front is curious and picturesque, in the mixed style of the fourteenth century. The fountain in front of it is exceedingly graceful. The archæologist will be gratified by visiting La Nunziatelli dei Catalani, resembling the Romanesque, the porch of La Madonna

della Scala, and of La Catholica, in the Pointed style; while the amateurs of gorgeous decoration should not fail to look in upon the Church of the Gregorian nuns, whence there is, besides, a magnificent view of the city and straits.

It has already been mentioned in the Introduction that Richard Cœur de Lion wintered at Messina on his way to Palestine, and it is traditionally believed that he built a tower commanding the town. It was an object with us if possible to discover this relic, and we repaired to a tower several stories high, now enclosed in a prison; but on examining this edifice, it proved far too massive for so hasty an erection. We were unable, however, to examine it closely. At the southern extremity of the quay, in an open square, is a statue of Don John of Austria, who sailed hence on his famous expedition against the Turks; but this interesting monument was almost knocked to pieces in the recent bombardment, and is, moreover, scarcely approachable for filth.

The carriage-road from Messina to Catania follows the shores of the Faro, and displays very pleasing scenery all the way. The fort of St. Alessio, built by the British during their occupation of the island, stands upon a bold promontory, from which the view extends on one side to Messina, and on the other to Taormina. This part of the ride resembles the famous Riviera of the Genoese coast, and is hardly less beautiful. Lofty mountains descend to the sea, leaving a narrow rim of richly cultivated plain, sprinkled with towns and villages; while a broad margin of white sand runs along the shore, and masses of rock have fallen into the transparent water. The ride is positively enchanting all the way to Giardini, where those who intend to visit Taormina are obliged to take up their quarters.

We found this little fishing town, which consists of one long street lining the sea, and crouching at the foot of lofty heights, amidst all the excitement of a festa. The inn was so crowded that with difficulty we obtained a room with a table and two

trestle beds, and a balcony overlooking the street, and in which we took post to survey the humours of the scene. And a very pleasing scene it was too, contrasting very favourably with the drunkenness and riot of an English wake. The whole population, gentle and simple, fishermen and fisherwives, turned out in their holiday attire, all the women wearing some ornament which seemed to have descended as an heir-loom from generation to generation. On meeting their friends and neighbours they saluted them with an affectionate kiss, and entered into conversation. We were much amused with the airs of a few would-be dandies, most execrably dressed, invested in white kids and carrying gold-headed canes. There was an air of genuine enjoyment spread over the scene. Across the street were suspended a considerable number of variegated lamps, a *chef-d'œuvre* of nautical art, with a large model of a ship—the work of some gifted fisherman. After dark began the real business of the festa. Bands of music struck up, there were discharges of musketry, the street was illuminated, and the great ship being suddenly set on fire, created an immense sensation; bonfires blazed, rockets were thrown up; and all in honour of some saint whose name has quite escaped my treacherous memory. All this may be called laziness and superstition; but it is a grave and suggestive question, whether the lower orders, with their numerous holidays and their harmless mode of enjoyment, do not spend their lives far happier than our over-worked and gin-excited population.

From the copious dinner and clean bed provided for us in the midst of all this clatter, it is evident that the inn at Giardini has been improved since it called down the denunciations of Mrs. Mariana Starke. Anxious to see the sun rise from the heights above, we left it before dawn, and retracing our road for about half a mile, struck up into a steep and very rugged path, which zigzags up the cliff upon which this aërial city is perched. It was a tough and toilsome clamber of about two miles to the

summit, but at every step the air became purer, and the glimpses of scenery more enchanting, and we kept on with unflagging perseverance till we stood on the topmost seat of the theatre of Taormina.

No one who has seen the sun rise from this glorious spot can ever forget it. Almost at our feet was the immense expanse of murmuring sea; below, the beautiful sweep of the theatre, and the broken arches of the proscenium, overhung by tremendous rocks half-covered with tufts of cactus—the town upon its beetling precipice—the winding shore, all the way from Syracuse to Messina—with the stupendous mass of Etna, towering above everything beside. The whole was dyed in those rich purple undertones of colour which in the south affect the senses like music; but the magic of light was yet wanting, till the sun, rising unclouded from the eastern wave, flashed instantaneously upon the cone of the volcano, suffusing it with the most delicate rose colour. Gradually it crept downward over the flank of the mountain, its precipices and forests, its cultivated slopes and white villages, until every detail of the magnificent scene was disclosed, lighted up with the resplendent transparency of a southern atmosphere.

The view from Taormina is undoubtedly the finest in all Sicily, and has been the oftenest represented, but nothing short of a panoramic view can give any adequate idea of its wonderful variety, and words are wholly useless to convey a distinct idea of what the pencil alone can but imperfectly accomplish. The portion of the view selected for our engraving represents the theatre, the town, and Mount Etna in the background.

The theatre is situated in a hollow of the mountain, and is semicircular in form. Great part of the scena appears in the view, with several Corinthian pillars, which have lately been restored to their original position by the zeal of the Duke of Serra-di-falco, one of the greatest ornaments of Sicily, and

THEATRE AT TAORMINA.

among her exiled patriots. In front is the space for the proscenium and orchestra. The seats for the spectators are gone. The top was surrounded by a wall and corridor supported on columns, one or two of which are still standing; and so perfect was the conveyance of sound, that words uttered even in a low voice on the proscenium are distinctly heard at the top. The chambers on each side the stage were probably devoted to actors, and a passage runs under it, supposed to have been intended for the prompter. The building, originally erected by the Greeks, was afterwards restored and modified by Roman taste.

While engaged in its examination, we were accosted by the *custode* of the edifice, who, after minutely explaining every portion of it, led the way to a small lodge, in which is preserved an ancient sarcophagus. He also showed us several respectable drawings of the theatre, which the wealthier class of travellers often carry away with them as memorials. We found this gentleman exceedingly intelligent and polite, and under his guidance visited what else was worthy of observation in the place.

Insignificant as is Taormina at the present day, it was one of the most ancient and celebrated cities in all Sicily. It was the last place that held out against the Saracens; and such was its almost impregnable strength, that it resisted all the efforts of a numerous army for nearly eight months. Neither could the Normans wrest it from the Saracens until they had, by blockading it with ditches and towers, starved out the garrison, after a siege of more than six months.

None of the antiquities at Taormina, except the theatre, proved of great interest, though an hour may be agreeably devoted to their examination. The cisterns stand on a rising ground behind the town, amidst some vineyards,—the grapes fully maintaining their ancient deliciousness of flavour. We were surprised and disappointed at finding no Saracenic remains; but there are some beautiful *morceaux* of Norman architecture, especially La

Badia Vecchia, near the wall which runs up to a ruined castle perched upon the summit of a rock. Above this again is a still higher one,—a perfect eagle's nest, and apparently all but inaccessible. Anywhere but in Sicily a place like Taormina would be a fortune to the innkeepers, but here is not a single place where the traveller can linger to explore the spot, and he is confined to a hurried though ineffaceable impression of its unrivalled beauties.

Taking leave of our intelligent cicerone at the Church of San Pancrazio, the site of an ancient temple, we descended by a corkscrew path through a glen, displaying a most surprising luxury of vegetation, to the high road, and so back to Giardini, whence we pursued our way to Catania.

Just below Taormina, on the left hand, was Naxos, already alluded to as one of the earliest Grecian colonies in Sicily. The road passes by the sea-shore, across a rich and luxuriant country, and through the towns of Giarra and Aci Reale. Near the latter is a group of remarkable objects connected with the eruptions of Etna. First there is the so-called Scala de Aci, or Staircase of Aci, where, according to fable, that shepherd was murdered by his rival Polyphemus. "The steps," says Mrs. Starke, "consist of at least nine different strata of lava, with a mould of vegetable earth between." The stream of lava on which Aci stands, according to Smythe, burst from Mount Etna during the second Punic war, and stopped the march of the Tauromenian troops advancing to aid the Syracusans.

The coast scenery is here rendered most striking by a singular cluster of islands called the Scopuli Cyclopum, displaying huge masses of lava and basaltic columns, rising wildly out of the bosom of the sea; the castle of Aci, standing on a huge volcanic rock, beetling over the waves, adds greatly to the effect of this singular picture. All this coast is haunted by classical associations. A small cove between this spot and Catania, is what was formerly believed to be the port of Ulysses,

Naxos.

CASTLE OF ACI.

but is now so disguised by lava, that it no longer answers the description given of it by Virgil:—

> The flagging winds forsook us with the sun;
> And, wearied, on Cyclopean shores we run.
> The port capacious, and secure from wind,
> Is to the foot of thund'ring Etna joined.
>
> *Virgil's Æneid*, book iii.

Shortly after Catania comes in sight, presenting a beautiful appearance with its domes and towers, surrounded by the most luxuriant vegetation. It is one of the largest and handsomest cities in the island, but has not yet recovered the interruption to its prosperity occasioned by the last revolution.

CHAPTER III.

CATANIA AND ITS MONUMENTS—MOUNT ETNA AND ITS PHENOMENA—ASCENT TO THE CRATER—TOUR AROUND THE MOUNTAIN.

READER, believe an old traveller, that there are few things in a small way that produce a more saddening revulsion of feeling, after anticipating your arrival at a really good inn—an oasis of comfort in a desert of dirt and filth—than to find it entirely altered, and the presiding spirit who once imparted to it warmth and cheerfulness, no longer among the living. Such, alas! is the case with the celebrated "Corona" at Catania, and its able, gentlemanly conductor, poor Abbaté, who was cut off during the recent struggle. It was generally reported that he was shot by accident; but certain parties to whom I applied told me a very different tale. According to their version, Abbaté, though he took no active part in the business, was known to be unfavourable to the popular party. When General Filangeri came to lodge at his house, he obtained, by some means, information of a plot to seize his person, and by warning him of his danger, enabled him to effect a timely escape. From this moment poor Abbaté was a marked man; and though it is generally said that he perished by an accidental discharge of fire-arms, there are others who believe that he fell a victim to the death-shot of some lurking assassin.

The streets of Catania, unlike those of most Italian cities, are broad and open, admitting a free circulation of air, but affording less shelter from the burning heat of the sun. Were the houses kept with the neatness of those of Valetta, this would be a very

MOUNT ÆTNA.

[illegible] year of [illegible]

handsome city; but dirt, dilapidation, and neglect of decency and comfort, give an air of shabbiness even to its finest squares and piazzas. It boasts of many charitable institutions; among the rest is a Foundling Hospital; the illegitimate births being here as *one to five*, a proportion which speaks ill indeed for the state of society and morals.

From Taormina to Catania we have been the whole way skirting the base of the mighty Etna, and everything around reminds us that we are within the sphere of his influence. The soil is either volcanic ashes or disintegrated lava; the streets of the city are built on lava, and are paved with lava blocks; the churches are often constructed of it. At Catania the volcano and its phenomena are the absorbing subjects of interest. The instant you arrive at the hotel you are beset with venders of lava specimens and knick-knacks, and with guides who are eager to conduct you to the summit, furnished with a long list of testimonials from English milordi, Russian counts, and American citizens. Before starting, however, on this excursion, some general idea of the mountain, its extent, appearance, phenomena, &c., may not be unacceptable to the reader.

By reference to the map of Sicily it will appear, that if we place the point of a pair of compasses in the crater of Etna, and describe a circle of about one hundred miles in circumference, we shall obtain a pretty correct idea of the vast extent over which the volcano predominates. The summit of the cone is more than ten thousand feet above the level of the sea; but this altitude is scarcely apparent, from the gradual and graceful manner in which the sides of the volcano slope downward until they are confounded with the plain below. Nothing, perhaps, will convey a better idea of its form than the annexed view, taken from the port of Catania. The foreground consists of a huge mass of lava, which, after covering over the old city of Catania, poured into the sea, where its black and jagged mass remains an eloquent memento of former convulsions. Catania,

with its white buildings and graceful domes, reposes gracefully along the harbour, and behind, the country gradually rises up to the base of Etna itself.

The whole of this immense region is everywhere covered with traces of volcanic action. Broad beds of lava, the issue of different eruptions, often pouring one over another, trace their sinuous course down the rugged flanks of the mountain, extending, as we have seen, even to the sea. The more recent remain black, and rugged, and fearful; but the more ancient are half, or quite, decomposed, and thickly covered with vegetation. The first region, rising gradually from the sea up to the base of the mountain, is a scene of the most luxuriant fertility. The olive, the vine, the fig, the prickly pear, almost entirely mantle over the volcanic soil.

From the roots of the mountain another zone, called the *Bosco*, or Woody Region, extends a considerable distance up its sides, displaying forests, principally of oak, ilex, and chestnut, and in some places of pine, sometimes in dense woods, at others scattered in groups like the scenery of an English park, interspersed with fern and aromatic herbs. In the lower part of this region the trees exhibit surprising vigour of growth. Perhaps the most extraordinary specimen is about six miles above Giarra, called the *castagno di cento cavalli*, or "the chestnut-tree of the hundred horses." This, if admitted to be indeed the offspring of but a single root, must be regarded as almost, if not quite, unequalled in dimensions; but, as a reference to the engraving will show, it consists in reality of several distinct trunks, together forming a circle, through the middle of which it would be easy to drive a carriage, while a hundred animals might certainly find shade and shelter beneath their wide-spreading branches. The entire girth at three feet above the ground is about a hundred and ninety feet. It has been suggested that this is the stock of an old chestnut from which fresh branches have sprung up. Be that as it may,

the tree, or group of trees, may well be cited as a striking instance of the prolific soil of the *Bosco*.

The base of the mountain below the Bosco may be said to be everywhere studded with about one hundred and eighty miniature cones—if we consider them in comparison with the mighty parent—thrown up by different eruptions. Some of these, indeed, anywhere else would form very respectable mountains of themselves; as for instance, the Monte Rosso, or Red Mountain, which rises above Nicolosi, so called from the colour of the ashes which compose it. This cone, and several others, appear in the engraving.

Finally, from the Bosco to the summit extends a third region, a scene of utter desolation, composed of deep hollows and dreary plateaux, covered with scoriæ and ashes, and buried in snow during several months of the year. This snow, however, is of vast importance to the whole population of Sicily, Malta, and sometimes even Barbary, where ices, during the heats of summer, are among the necessaries of life. The exhaustion of the stock is capable of producing serious disturbances; and the governor of Catania was, on one occasion, obliged to offer a large reward for any one who would discover a fresh supply, when at length a bed of snow was found covered beneath a torrent of lava.

Owing to its proximity to Etna, Catania has been so repeatedly overwhelmed, that none of its ancient edifices are now left standing above ground. Constructed with the lava of former eruptions, they are now embedded in that of later ones, but by the zeal and energy of Prince Biscari, their position has been ascertained, and their remains partly disinterred from the close locked embrace of the lava. It is not our intention to describe them in detail. Some, as the Theatre and Odeon, are the work of the Greeks, as the Amphitheatre is of the Romans. Most of these excavations were exclusively intended to gratify antiquarian curiosity; but one of them had utility chiefly as its object. There formerly stood beneath the castle,

and close to the ancient wall of the city, a spring of delicious water, which was of inestimable value to the surrounding neighbourhood. But during the eruption of 1669 an immense bed of lava descended upon this part of the city, gradually accumulating by pressure until it attained a depth of sixty feet, poured over the wall, covered in the spring, and finally projected its enormous mass into the harbour. As the want of the water was severely felt, its recovery became an important object, and a small orifice, fortunately left near the spot, enabled the prince to fix the site, and open an excavation which restored the hidden spring to its original uses. From the street above, a long winding staircase of sixty-three steps, between lateral and overhanging masses of lava, conducts to the precious water, which, from the number of people constantly ascending and descending, is evidently in great request. Standing at the bottom, the ancient wall is seen on the right, overhung with what, in the engraving, might be taken for a mighty rock, but which is in reality nothing but the black and hardened masses of once fluid red-hot lava, through which the passage was forced; while overtopping the whole are seen the houses of the modern city, which may again in their turn become subject to the like visitation.

As connected with this last-mentioned eruption in 1669, the Benedictine Monastery is worthy of especial notice. It stands on high ground in the upper part of the city, and is a very splendid and extensive edifice, containing a museum full of ancient Sicilian vases, resembling the Etruscan, with other curiosities well worthy of examination; also a fine church, with an organ of remarkable power and sweetness. The garden is a delicious spot, full of the most odoriferous shrubs and flowers, and commanding a noble view of Etna, and it is formed upon a part of the same tremendous torrent which buried the ancient wall and spring above-mentioned. On looking over the wall, it appears fairly environed with a sea of lava, amidst which stand

WELL AT CATANIA

up also several arches of an ancient Roman aqueduct. The escape of this monastery was certainly most extraordinary, the fiery flood approaching on one side within ten yards, and on the other within five of it, when it suddenly divided into two branches, leaving the convent unharmed in the midst. Of course, there can be but one opinion assigned for this surprising escape by the monks:—

> "*They* say that Providence protected them;
> For my part, I say nothing—lest we clash
> In our opinions."

Nevertheless, scoffers there are to be found who, doubting whether the brethren were worthy of any special interposition, attribute their immunity simply to the formation of the ground, which breaking away, though slightly, in opposite directions, compelled the devouring torrent to do so likewise. It was an escape, however, that might well appear miraculous to a southern mind.

After visiting these antiquities, the collection of Prince Biscari, and the different sights of Catania, I was now anxious to ascend the mountain. One day, on entering the dining-room at the "Corona," I found the table laid for four; and the *maître d'hôtel* informed me that these guests were a party of Germans, who, after an early dinner, were to start in a coach hired to take them to Nicolosi and back again, whence they intended to make a nocturnal ascent of Etna. He advised me to seize this opportunity, as it was always more prudent, as well as pleasant, to go in a body. With the consent of these gentlemen I therefore joined them at table, and afterwards made one of their party. Of all foreign travelling companions, commend me to the Germans; there is about them a plainness and heartiness congenial to John Bull,—and then the economy of the thing!—only leave them to manage the expenses, to do battle with innkeepers, and you will come off at least a third

cheaper than in your own character of an Englishman. I do not know, indeed, whether they do not sometimes carry this spirit of economy *a leetle grain* too far. One of those gentlemen was a savant from Berlin, a man of immense information, but of almost childlike simplicity of manner, and on this occasion as full of animal spirits as a schoolboy broke loose for a holiday. The others were members of mercantile houses at Messina, the senior of whom, a short, square-built, resolute little man, with a fund of dry, sarcastic humour, and a terrible eye for an innkeeper's bill, undertook the financial arrangements of the party. When the account was presented, it was his custom to pore over it long and intently; then pointing to it with his finger, he slowly lifted up his eyes to those of the trembling waiter, with a solemn intensity of stare, as if to petrify the wretch who could dare to present so infamous and extortionate a demand. The battle then began in earnest, every item being disputed with the utmost fierceness and tenacity, the conflict ending in a considerable reduction; the innkeeper, knowing that if he charged the articles at less than prime cost he would have to take something off, having prudently put down more than he expected to get, although not more than he would have been perfectly contented to receive. In some of the smaller towns, the charge is, indeed, quite experimental; and I have myself cut down a bill to *one-third*, that third being not *less* than double what the natives would have paid. It is needless to say that the innkeeper was perfectly contented.

After a jovial dinner, and packing into the carriage a copious supply of provisions, wine and brandy, and arraying ourselves in our warmest habiliments, about two in the afternoon, when all the world were yet enjoying their siesta, we left Catania by the *Strada Etnea*, or Etna-street, and began slowly to climb the gentle and gradual slope, which extends as far as Nicolosi, about fourteen miles distant. It has been said that he who ascends Etna must pass, in a few hours, through the *torrid*, the *temperate*,

NICOLOSI.

and Mount Etna

and the *frigid* zone. This is true to the fullest extent. The beams of an afternoon sun beating intensely upon the volcanic soil were insufferably oppressive, but nothing could exceed the luxuriance of the vegetable productions of this the lower zone of the mountain—a perfect garden for several miles. It was only in approaching Nicolosi, after a toilsome drag of three hours, that a change of scenery became perceptible. The olive-groves and vineyards grew gradually thinner, till they almost entirely ceased, their place being supplied by dreary beds of grey lava, interspersed with patches of heath and scrubby thickets of oak and chestnut, showing, together with a greater coolness in the air, that we had passed through the torrid, and were now entering the temperate zone of the mountain.

As we approached the little white village of Nicolosi, where we intended to halt some hours, the scene before us was exceedingly majestic. Close behind it rose two huge conical hills, composed of volcanic ashes, and called, from their colour, the Monti Rossi, or Red Mountains. These would be anywhere else very striking objects; but the majestic mountain towering behind to the height of 10,000 feet, appears in comparison with them "like Ossa to a wart."

At the entrance of the village we came to a halt and dismounted, and, this being the end of the carriage-road, were forthwith boarded by one of the guides, who conducted us to a small inn which serves as a shelter for travellers ascending the mountain. It consisted of but a single principal room, with trestle-beds in the four corners, and a long deal table in the midst, with one or two smaller chambers; but it looked clean and comfortable, exceedingly so for Sicily; and by referring to the book which displayed the signatures and chronicled the effusions, sentimental and otherwise, of people from all parts of the world, and of all ranks in society, we found that some travellers had taken up their abode in it for several days, and

expressed themselves even more than satisfied with the host and his accommodation.

Coffee was soon served, it being now about six o'clock, and a conference held with the chief of the guides, who, like those at Chamouni, form an organized community, subject to a code of their own, and are a trustworthy, intrepid, and obliging body of men. And though the ascent of Etna is easy compared with that of Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau, yet the sudden vicissitude of temperature, the intense cold, the clouds of sulphur, and the tremendous winds which often sweep the upper region of the volcano, require the presence of a trustworthy and experienced guide. To these may be added, in the winter and spring, the depth of snow which, as we found, had often prevented persons from reaching the summit; an obstacle, however, with which we had not to contend, as we had fallen upon the end of autumn, when none was left upon the mountain.

Our first inquiry was touching the weather, which to our unpractised eye seemed most unfavourable, the crater being entirely concealed by thick clouds, but these the guide assured us would roll off before the morning. At their suggestion we then proceeded to pay a visit to Signor Gemellaro, who resided a few doors off, and who keeps the key of the "Casa Inglese," (a hut of refuge at the foot of the cone, so called because erected at the expense of certain English officers during our occupation of the island,) and who is regarded as an infallible authority in all matters concerning Etna and its belongings.

Preceded by the guide, we set out in a body, and on knocking at a gate, were admitted into a court-yard, surrounded on three sides with vines, and having on the other the simple abode of the good signor, who lives, like a philosopher of old, amidst his books and specimens, in a decent mediocrity of fortune. As he came forth and welcomed us, we were much prepossessed with his appearance; and nothing could savour less of pedantry and

pretension than his manner, which displayed the ease and good breeding of polished society, with an openness and cordiality peculiar to himself. He showed us his Etnean specimens, maps, &c., encouraged us to persevere in our intention, and gave the necessary orders for our guides and horses. After spending a very pleasant half-hour with him, we took our leave and returned to the inn. Signor Gemellaro, who is of good family at Catania, may almost be termed "the old man of the mountain," having lived all his life beneath its shadow, and devoted all his energies to the examination of its phenomena. He has already witnessed one or two of its eruptions, and prognosticates new ones before long. His researches are really valuable, and his attentions to travellers unremitting. With the aid of their occasional contributions, he has done all in his power to keep the "Casa Inglese" in decent repair; but, as he informed us, the winds and earthquakes had sadly shattered it, and its present condition was exceedingly ruinous.

Everybody knows that the great object of ascending Etna is to see the sun rise from its summit; and in order to do this it is necessary to leave Nicolosi about nine o'clock at night,—six hours' riding being required to reach the Casa Inglese, and about another to halt there and climb the cone. At nine, therefore, our horses were in waiting at the door of the hostelry. On our way to Nicolosi we had passed, mounted on asses, three Jesuits in their black robes, who politely saluted us, and who now sent word that they should be happy to join us; but this proposal seemed anything but agreeable to our leader. "I never can move," he said, "but these ill-omened ravens are hovering about my track. The other day, on the steamer, no less than *thirteen* Jesuits were on board: *thirteen*, gentlemen; think of that in case of a storm," he repeated, with an expression of sarcastic bitterness. A discouraging, not to say rather a rude reply, was returned, and leaving the Jesuits to shift for themselves, we mounted our quadrupeds and set off without them.

Although the night was starry, the moon had not yet risen, and in the uncertain light we found the pathway, worn across a tract of lava, exceedingly rugged and tedious. The surface of these lava beds is not, as the reader may perhaps imagine, smooth and level, but resembles immense masses of burnt bricks, full of yawning holes and rents. At every step the horses slip, and get their feet entangled; yet, from long habit, they generally contrive to pick their way without falling. These irregular masses of lava presented a most fantastic and wonderful appearance in the light of the moon, which rose upon us as we reached the commencement of the Bosco, or woody region, into which we now struck, single file, as the narrowness of the path, jagged with stones and roots of trees, would alone enable us to do.

We enjoyed beyond measure our romantic moonlight ride through the Bosco. The path kept constantly and rapidly on the ascent, and our long winding cavalcade sometimes crossed an open glade surrounded with gnarled oak-trees, whose bold stems and fantastic branches glittered ghost-like in the whitening beams, sometimes dived among the deep recesses of the foliage, or threaded the brink of some hollow umbrageous chasm. In this way we continued to ascend for about three hours, the air getting sensibly colder, until, just before emerging from the shelter of the woods, the shouts of our guides summoned us to bring up alongside an old withered prostrate trunk, which formed at once a rallying-place and shelter. Our steeds were turned loose under the care of a lad who had trotted after us from Nicolosi; and a huge fire was immediately kindled, which, glaring over the scattered group and the surrounding forest-trees, produced a singular and startling effect. Our provisions were forthcoming, —cold fowls unceremoniously torn in four like criminals by wild horses, and eagerly devoured. What with this cheer, and the copious libations which washed it down, the warmth of the fire, and the wild excitement of the scene around, the forest was ringing to our obstreperous clamour, when the light suddenly

revealed the broad-brimmed hats and lanky figures of our rejected Jesuits, who, with their guide, had set out directly after us and followed closely upon our traces. "The ravens are on us," whispered our jovial little leader, as he stood upon a log, with the third bottle in hand, ready to dispense to a whole circle of jingling glasses; "and English they are, too, by the mass," he added, catching a few words of their conversation as they came within earshot of our bivouac. At this I immediately stepped forward, and respectfully accosted the new comers in our native tongue. The oldest was a tall man, about fifty, of high-bred and courtly address. The others, one of whom had a singularly prepossessing countenance, and answered to an aristocratic name, were about twenty, and apparently under his control. As they drew near the fire, the young man above signalized, overcome with fatigue, threw himself upon the ground, declaring that he could go no further, and earnestly entreated to be allowed to enjoy but a few minutes' sleep before beginning the last and most difficult part of the ascent. To this rash request the guides were however inexorable, and rallying the young fellow with brandy and exhortations, we got him on his horse again, and recommenced our clamber.

Never perhaps (except the Jesuits, who maintained their habitual decorum) did a more uproarious party ascend Etna than our own. We soon quitted the Bosco, and scrambled up the open mountain side at the pleasure of our horses, and by paths which, on descending the next day, we were utterly unable to recognise. The Germans roared out fragments of national songs "without mitigation or remorse of voice;" but this wild-fire was shortly spent. As we got higher and higher up the unsheltered side of the mountain, the temperature grew rapidly colder, and a keen wind, from which the forests had sheltered us, began to chill us to the very bone. It was curious enough to hear the catches gradually growing fainter and fainter, until they ceased altogether, succeeded by chattering of teeth and shivering

of the limbs, and slapping of the arms and thighs, with anxious inquiries of the guides of "how far it was yet to the Casa." "In less than an hour you will be there," was the encouraging reply. An hour, indeed, it proved to be, and by far the longest and the bitterest within my recollection.

Our jaws were going like castanets when we reached the Casa Inglese, which appeared, as Signor Gemellaro had informed us, almost in a state of ruin. It was about two in the morning,

the stars yet shining brightly, and the cone faintly distinguishable in the background. Half petrified, we dismounted from our horses, and entered this miserable hovel, and the guides exerted themselves to kindle a little fire, but it was some time before they were able to do so. The cold was excessive; the wind, which had now considerably increased, cut us all to the bone, and, for my own part, I suffered from an oppression of the chest which I did not get rid of for several hours afterward. After taking some refreshment, we braced up our nerves for the final

clamber, and set forth, one or two guides bearing torches to pilot us over the rugged beds of lava between the Casa and the cone. This part of the business was very disagreeable to ourselves, but would have been comic enough to a spectator: the torches of the guides danced about like a will-o'-the-wisp, and sometimes disappeared altogether in some rugged hollow; while, stumbling and floundering along, wounding our shins and scratching our hands against the jagged edges of the lava, but avoiding a serious tumble, in about a quarter of an hour we stood at the foot of the cone.

Halting for a moment to gather fresh energy, we began the steep ascent, rendered additionally toilsome by the looseness of the soil, and the furious gusts of wind, which threatened fairly to blow us off our legs. As we drew nearer the summit, at every few steps we were obliged to halt for breath, and plant our feet more firmly in the ashy soil, or avail ourselves of a projecting lump of sulphur to gain a safer foothold. There was an evident struggle who should get first to the top: for my own part, I reached it about the midst of the party, and, fairly exhausted with fatigue, dropped down full length on the crusted sulphur a little below the cone, so as to shelter myself from the keen and icy wind. The rest came toiling slowly up, assisted by the guides; and just as day began to break, the whole body were assembled at the summit of Etna.

The guides had timed the thing exactly. It was between three and four; the stars were rapidly disappearing from the paling sky, while the eastern horizon began to faintly redden with the dawn. Those who have never witnessed, can scarcely realize by any description the strangeness of such a scene. Everything in the vast gulf below was dark and formless—the sea barely distinguishable from the land—vast whitish clouds like wool-sacks floating solemnly above it. A few bars of crimson soon appeared on the eastward horizon, the sea-line became defined, the jagged edges of the distant mountains of Apulia cut against the sky. At this moment our guides shouted

to us to stand up on the edge of the crater, and look out over the interior of the island, which stretched away to the westward like a sea of rugged summits, blended in the shadowy mist of dawn. Just as the sun rose, an immense shadow of the most exquisite purple was projected from the volcano half over the island, while without its range the light struck with magic suddenness upon the tops of the mountains below,—a phenomenon so admirably beautiful that it would have more than repaid us for the labour of the ascent.

The wind had now become so violent and penetrating that not one of us was able to make the circuit of the crater, or indeed to stand up to windward for more than a few moments together. The crater, however, so far as we could observe, is not in itself by any means so striking as that of Vesuvius. All the top of the mountain is heated, and little jets of steam shot up at intervals from the crevices of the yellow-crusted sulphur.

The view from Etna proved rather different from what previous description had led me to anticipate. Vastness and dreary sublimity predominate, relieved with some few touches of exquisite beauty. Standing on the dread summit of the volcano, the eye takes in with astonishment the immense extent of the region, at once desolated and fertilized by its eruptions. Wide beds of lava—black, abrupt, and horrid—may be traced down its deep sinuosities and chasms, winding half concealed among the extensive forests below, even through the midst of the fertile region which reposes at its base, until they pour into the sea; and interspersed with these are broad dismal beds of ashes and scoriæ,—the seat of eternal desolation. Beneath the Bosco, and around the base of Etna, the boundary of the region subject to its effects may be distinctly traced. Beyond, in all directions, extend the fertile plains and mountains of the island, the latter, however, of an aspect little less wild and desolate than that of Etna itself. The range of the

view is almost boundless,—Catania, Syracuse, and even, when clear, Malta itself are visible. Castro Giovanni stands up on its rock, conspicuous in the centre of the island. The expanse of sea is most magnificent, with the distant mountains of Calabria and Apulia, and the entrance to the Faro di Messina.

Nearly eighty eruptions of Etna are on record from the earliest historic times, and there are no doubt others which have escaped the chroniclers. The first mentioned occurred in the time of Pythagoras, about the 55th Olympiad; the second, under Geron, in the 76th; the third, between the 88th and 89th. It was on one of these occasions, as tradition tells us, that two brothers fled, bearing on their shoulders their aged parents. The lava gained so rapidly upon them, that, encumbered as they were, escape seemed hopeless, when the burning torrent, as if respecting their filial piety, suddenly parted in two, and left them uninjured in the midst. A field of lava, about four miles from Catania, is still named "Campo dei fratelli pii." Thucydides mentions an eruption that in his day overwhelmed the country of the Catanians which dwelt beneath; this was said to have occurred fifty years after another one; and three other instances were on record since the arrival of the Greeks in Sicily. Plato visited Sicily in the first instance to examine the mountain; and Adrian, who seems to have been the most persevering of ancient travellers, ascended the cone, like the moderns, to behold the sun rise from its summit. The old story that Empedocles cast himself into the crater in order to acquire immortality, is held to be very improbable, it being more probable that he fell in accidentally while pursuing his researches too closely.

The cold was so insupportable, and the wind so furious, that we were unable to dwell on this splendid spectacle as long as we could desire. One by one we began to descend the cone; and, as at Vesuvius, leaning back upon our heels, and dashing through the loose ashes at railroad pace, we speedily regained the Casa Inglese, remounted our steeds, and turned our faces towards

Nicolosi. Our guides made us diverge from the road to obtain a view of the Val di Bove, a profound chasm exhibiting the most terrible volcanic phenomena, and perhaps the grandest feature of the whole scenery. They also pointed out to us the traditionary Torre di Filosofo. But to linger anywhere in the face of so cold a wind was impossible. We struck into a maze of hollows and ravines composed of loose ashes and scoriæ, with tufts of scanty vegetation; and were utterly astonished to learn that it was along this rugged and difficult way that we had ascended during the darkness of the previous night. The atmosphere, as we continued to descend, became gradually warmer, and when we reached the level of Nicolosi, seemed by contrast intolerably sultry and oppressive. At length, outwearied with more than twelve hours' constant exertion and sudden changes of temperature, we joyfully reached the inn at Nicolosi, and flung ourselves on our couches to obtain the repose which we so greatly needed; and after further recruiting our energies with such provisions as the place afforded, in the cool of the evening we returned to Catania.

Our ascent to the summit of Etna had proved so agreeable, that we now resolved on hiring a carriage and making the tour of the mountain. Early in the morning, having laid in a good stock of eatables and wine—for supplies on the road were understood to be very precarious—we started off upon our *giro*, taking the direct post road to Paternò. For some miles the ascent was very gradual, and, owing to the pulverized ashes and scoriæ of which the road was formed, intolerably dusty. But the luxuriance of vegetation which clothed this volcanic soil was unequalled; Indian-corn, orange and olive groves, almond, citron, and other fruit-trees, formed a perfect garden on each side of the road.

But of all the vegetable productions of the lower zone of Etna the Indian fig is perhaps the most prolific. It is propagated with the greatest care, and soon attains a prodigious

growth. Nothing can look more hopeless at first than the appearance of one or two slips of this plant stuck in the midst of a wide bed of black and decomposed lava, yet it speedily strikes into the fissures, and puts forth its tangled branches, till they form an almost impenetrable maze.

Each leaf is terminated by several bright crimson flowers, and afterward by as many of the figs, of which the natives are passionately fond. Even strangers, although they find them insipid at first, at length consume them with almost equal relish. My companions, if they chanced to meet a peasant woman carrying a basket of fresh pulled figs to the market, invariably leaped out and made a dash at them. The woman stood by, rapidly and dexterously peeling off the rind at all but the lower end, as a street vender opens and presents his oysters; and truly the fruit seemed to disappear down their gullets with the same celerity as the fish. I envied the gastronomic powers of my friends; they seemed, like the Neapolitans with their macaroni, to have acquired by practice an extraordinary facility of swallow, and no less vigorous power of digestion. On congratulating them, they modestly declared that the compliment was unmerited, that their own efforts were mere child's play to those of the natives; and one of them assured me he had known an *habitué* at Catania who could dispose of as many as *fifty* of the fruit at a standing!

After passing the village of Misterbianco the scenery was strikingly beautiful. On the one hand towered Etna and its vast volcanic fields covered with forests and gardens, and on the other the feudal towers of Motta; and next, on a bold projecting rock, the massive square keep and castle of Paternò, one of the earliest specimens of the architecture of the Normans in Sicily, the germ of which was built by Count Roger, as a stronghold during his struggles with the Saracens, and afterwards enlarged and occupied by his descendants as a feudal residence. On entering the long straggling town, we obtained a striking view of

the keep tower, which in general form and character resembled those of Rochester and London, and other works of the Normans in our own country and at the same period.

As my companions possessed but little archæological enthusiasm, they were unwilling to spare time for the examination of this ancient pile, and I therefore extract a few particulars concerning it from the work of Mr. Galley Knight.

"The keep is the only part of the castle which remains, and stands on the brink of the precipice. It is a huge oblong pile, very lofty, and perfect to the top. The walls are extremely thick, built of rubble with ashler coignes. The door, which seems to have been the original entrance, is small, on the second story, and was probably approached by a movable staircase. In the next story is a row of small, double, round-headed

windows, divided by a single pillar. In the fourth story, at a very considerable height from the ground, is a large four-centered arch, containing within it two pointed arches divided by a column. The same arrangement of windows occurs on the opposite side of the building. Having entered the keep by a modern door, we climbed up a narrow staircase, and found that the lower row of small windows lighted a long hall, with a stone pointed vault, without groinings. There are stone benches along the walls, small recesses between the windows, and at the upper end a large projecting fire-place. In the stone-floor is an aperture, through which prisoners were probably let down into the dungeons below. In this story are other vaulted rooms, one of which has some appearance of having been used as a chapel.

"Ascending to the fourth story, we found a larger and loftier vaulted hall, running transversely through the building, from side to side, and lighted at each end by the windows contained in the pointed arches. Out of this hall open several small vaulted rooms, annexed to one of which is an oratory. All the doorways of these rooms are pointed. Ascending again, we went out upon the roof, which is flat, and has a parapet, affording a space where the female inmates of the castle might enjoy the refreshment of the evening breeze."

After passing for some miles over lava beds in every stage of decomposition, some bare and dreary, some half-veiled with scattered patches of heath, and others bearing the richest masses of Indian fig and olive, we saw before us the town of Adernò, adorned with another huge square keep, also the work of the Normans. The first object that saluted our eyes on entering was the façade of the immense nunnery of Santa Lucia, upon the site of one founded by the Norman Countess Adalasia. We stopped at the door of a most detestable hostelry, and had ample reason to congratulate ourselves upon the good things contained in our provision basket. Nothing certainly can exceed the filth and misery of these little Sicilian inns. Mr. Knight complains,

that on taking up his quarters for the night at Paternò, "like Polonius in the play, he ate not, but was eaten." Happily, though we had to go further, we could not fare worse than this, and might hope for better accommodations at Bronte.

While the horses were resting we took a stroll about the town, which turned out to be a perfect nest of convents and nunneries, originally founded by the Normans. Nothing was to be seen around but heavy walls, perforated by grated windows, at which the pale face and white head-dress of the nuns furtively peeped out; nothing to be heard but bells summoning them to the religious exercises that occupied the greatest part of their monotonous life.

Probably four-fifths of the population of the town were composed of these pious personages, male and female, and the remainder, of a most wretched, lazy, degraded set of beings living in dependence upon the convents, which possess large landed revenues. Nothing more depressing can possibly be imagined than such a hotbed of holiness. For ourselves, unworthy heretics, we felt this odour of sanctity too much for us, and were glad when the gloomy belfries and ponderous prison-houses of Adernò receded into the distance. Those who would see what Catholicism is when it puts its foot on the neck of a people, should come to a place like this and study it. Could its history be unfolded, the inner life of its victims be written, their struggles and sufferings laid bare, how dreary, how terrible, might be such a revelation!

From Catania to Adernò the road winds around the southern side of Etna. We now began to skirt its western, which is more abrupt, and displays but little of that luxurious vegetation and smiling appearance which had so much gratified us. On the contrary, the road to Bronte winds among immense beds of grey ashy lava, tufted with heath and extending to the torrent below, which forms the limit of the volcanic region. Nothing in the world can be more desolate or forbidding. On approaching Bronte the road is cut through the tremendous mass of lava

poured out by the last eruption, easily distinguishable from the older bed by the intense blackness of its colour and the utter absence of vegetation. It is, indeed, a fearful mass; and looking up to the mountain which rises behind, its devastating course may be traced almost to the summit. A person who had witnessed the last eruption described this tremendous torrent of red-hot lava as it poured down the sinuosities of the mountain, sometimes accumulating by pressure into an overgrown mass, which, tumbling over in cascades of molten fire, pursued afresh its awful course towards the town of Bronte, which it threatened to overwhelm.

This fearful anticipation was not, however, fulfilled. One of the most curious phenomena of this slope of Etna is the manner in which the torrents of lava seem abruptly to have stopped short, leaving certain fertile spots, of which every advantage has been taken, and which are perfectly green with vineyards and olives. Thus smiling is the approach to the town of Bronte, which, on turning a corner, comes on the eye with startling effect, with its immense mass of rude houses, and churches, and convents, piled in the strangest confusion upon the mountain side, and absolutely surrounded by lava beds, from which it seems to have escaped as if by miracle, as the inhabitants, of course, devoutly believe it did.

Our carriage on entering the narrow streets could hardly get along for the crowded population, who had gathered together on some festal occasion. There is no describing the wildness of their appearance; tall, slender, and active mountaineers, dressed in black cloth and leggings, descended from a colony of Albanians. They stared at us like beings from another world, and we could scarcely push our way into the little inn, the basement of which was, as usual, for horses, and the upper story portioned into several wretched rooms, redolent of the stable odours below. Here my German friends found two of their compatriots from Messina, who had come thus far for a frolic; and joyous was the

recognition. After a long delay, necessary to prepare for so unusual a number of guests, the cloth, foul with the traces of former feasting, was laid, and, one by one, a set of knives and forks, all of them odd ones, adorned it, the production of which occasioned infinite merriment, each of them so rusty and stained that they looked as if they must have been the instruments of some midnight murder. The supper, however, to get up which no exertion had been spared, was, though roughly served, both copious and succulent. Our friends had brought with them some capital wine, and the mirth of the whole company was at its height, when the door was thrown open, and a band of Brontean musicians, without a word of notice, struck up some lively national airs, to which the Germans, gravely rising from their seats, began to waltz round the room in a style more energetic than elegant. The whole affair went off in the most jovial style, after which beds were made up in the corners for four, and I tossed up with one of my comrades for the table and won it. Considering the usual state of the walls and bedsteads, it seemed to be the most removed from the perils of a nocturnal attack: but it is only just to our host to declare that our apprehensions of a fate similar to Mr. Galley Knight's were, in this instance, unfounded. On the contrary, and with an emphasis, we "*ate,* and were *not* eaten."

This strangest of all possible places gave a title to Lord Nelson, who always subscribed himself "Nelson and Bronte;" and considerable estates, presented to him by the King of Naples, are still in the possession of his descendants, and managed by an English agent.

Bronte, as before said, is on the slope of Etna, at the bottom of which is a deep valley, and on the opposite side are lofty, dreary mountains, amidst which are the Convent of Maniace and the Cathedral of Traina, which, with the Convent of St. Elias of Ambula, were among the numerous foundations of the great Count Roger the Norman.

Leaving Bronte at an early hour, we continued our road, which coasted the northern side of Etna, and presented a new and very delightful phase of scenery. Extensive woods of oak and chestnut clothed the flanks of the mountain and overshadowed the road, but still the predominant element is never long out of sight, and beds of ancient lava intervene here and there all the way to Randazzo. Randazzo is like a town of the middle ages preserved as a curiosity, with its gloomy walls overhanging a ravine,—its Norman churches, and streets of coeval architecture, subsisting almost unaltered to the present day.

From Randazzo the country gradually opens, and displays the same rich and beautiful features as the district around Catania. At Lingua Grossa, our next stage, preparations were a-foot for a grand festa:—paltry lamps stuck out in front of the cavernous abodes, and triumphal arches erected, bearing the double inscription—

VIVA MARIA!—VIVA IL RE!

"Long live Maria!—Long live the King!" To a Protestant, little as he is chargeable with undue reverence to the mother of Jesus, there is, nevertheless, something not a little revolting in this association of names,—the meek and lowly Virgin,

"Purer than foam on central ocean tost,"

side by side with the tyrannical despot of Mr. Gladstone's Letters. Here, however, it is perfectly natural, the idolatrous worship of the one being intimately allied with blind unreasoning submission to the other: priestcraft and kingcraft naturally play into each other's hands, and must stand or fall together. It should not be forgotten, however, that the discontent of the people, superstitious as they are, is profound, and that this was most likely a mere get-up of the authorities. Here we took refuge in a little *café*, and by dint of great exertions contrived to obtain a miserable luncheon.

On leaving this poverty stricken den a lovely scene indeed broke on us: the sea in the distance—the slope of the mountain covered with vines—the rich plain at its base: quite a magic change after the dreary lava-beds over which we had been toiling. Giardini was below us on the sunny shore,—our destined resting-place for the night. Altogether we were well satisfied to have encircled the mighty volcano, and formed an adequate idea (as it is only possible to do by such a journey) of the immensity of the region at once desolated and fertilized by its influence,—its prolific vegetation, its awful lava-beds, its dense forests, its antiquated towns, and its wild population. But enough of dust and ashes; we were by this time heartily sick of volcanic phenomena, and so we have no doubt are our readers also.

CHAPTER IV.

LENTINI — SYRACUSE — HISTORICAL DETAILS — THEATRE — AMPHITHEATRE — PRISONS—EAR OF DIONYSIUS—DISTANT VIEW—ROAD TO GIRGENTI—TERRANOVA—ALICATA—PALMA.

On leaving Catania for Syracuse, after clearing the district of lava, we traversed a rich and fertile, but nevertheless melancholy looking plain; and crossing the river Simeto at a ferry, in the evening reached Lentini, at which wretched town, infamous for the malaria generated by the neighbouring marshy lake, we were reluctantly compelled to remain for the night. Above this place was the ancient Leontium, inhabited by the Læstrygones, whence the neighbouring fields were denominated the Læstrygonii Campi. The next day's journey was over a rough tract, interspersed with a wild growth of oleander and scented myrtle, while tufts of flowering plants start up from the crevices of the rocks, as they do on all the sea-coast of Sicily. Some distance on the left was the fortified town of Augusta, having a good harbour, but now become a lifeless, melancholy place.

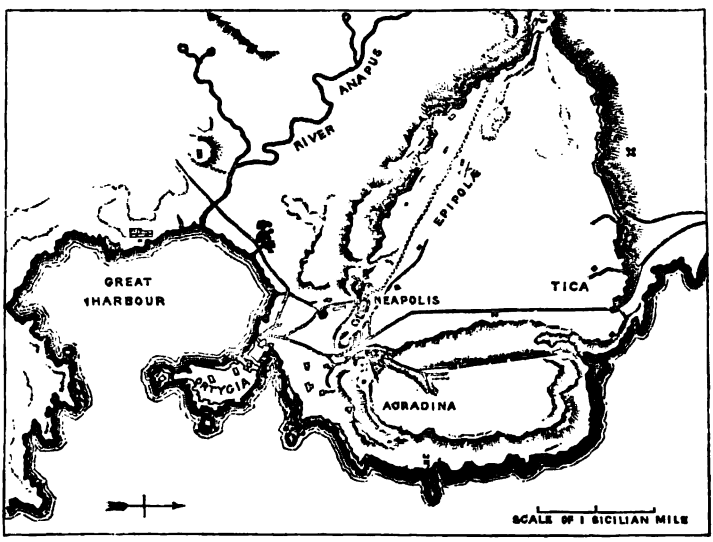
It was drawing to the close of a warm summer evening that we approached Syracuse, passing the site of Thapsus, mentioned by Virgil, and entering the site of the city by the Scala Græca. Our path lay across the rocky ground which was formerly the quarter of Acradina. Tombs cut in the crags and traces of foundations were all around; but hyacinths and wild plants started from the crevices of the cliff which once was a crowded quarter of the city, but where now no sound arose but that of our mules clattering over the stony track. Beyond lay the island of Ortygia, covered by the modern town. On the nearer side was the smaller port, and on the further the great harbour, so often the

scene of naval conflict,—a placid sheet of water, now occupied only by a few insignificant barks. There was an air of decay over the scene, beautiful as it was, producing an involuntary melancholy, increased on entering the town, by the appearance of the streets and population, who seem to vegetate in indolence, filth and wretchedness. Our satisfaction was great at finding so good an inn (classically called "Il Sole") in so miserable a place. The proprietor is also a wine merchant; for, amidst the wreck of all beside, the wines of Syracuse have still maintained somewhat of their original reputation. It is suggested by a friend that "the broken pottery in Alexandria, the remains of the jars in which the wine was imported, tell us that the greater part of it was brought in jars made in Rhodes; and as no good wine, and very little, was made in that island, and the same broken jars are found in Sicily, we infer that the jars were made in Rhodes, filled in Sicily, and the wine drunk in Alexandria under the Ptolemies."

It is not our intention to weary the reader with a prolix description of the monuments of Syracuse, which are for the most part either obliterated or insignificant, but to confine these notices to a few of the most prominent objects. The map will display, better than any description, the site of the ancient city and the immense extent of its walls, the greater and lesser harbours, and the different quarters into which it was divided.

Of Syracuse, the most magnificent of all the Grecian colonies, and which far exceeded in size any in the parent country, the foundation has been already noticed; and it so rapidly increased in wealth and population as to throw off numerous colonies, and become the most powerful of the Sicilian states. It attained the summit of glory under Gelon, at the period of the war between the Greeks and Persians. The former, menaced by an overwhelming force, sent to implore the succour of Gelon, upon which the Persians instigated the Carthaginians to the invasion

of Sicily; having overrun the interior on the 1st of August, of the 75th Olympiad (B.C. 480). They appeared before Syracuse with a powerful army; but, on the memorable field of Imera, were routed with immense slaughter on the same day as the battle of Salamis. The magnanimous Gelon permitted the discomfited Carthaginians to return to their own country, on the sole condition that they should send two vessels as a testimony of their gratitude, and abolish the horrible practice of immolating human victims to Neptune; the noblest treaty of peace, as Montesquieu observes, recorded in history—Gelon, after



MAP OF SYRACUSE.

having defeated three hundred thousand Carthaginians, imposes a condition useful only to themselves, or rather one in behalf of humanity at large. The Syracusans now showed their gratitude by raising Gelon to the sovereign power. He appeared before the council unarmed, and his naked person invested in a cloak, in order, as he said, that any one might slay him who could accuse him of having done injury to his country. With one

voice the people proclaimed him king. Geron, his successor, protected the arts and letters, and numbered Simonides, Pausanias, Æschylus and Pindar among his friends.

Although divided by faction, and at times oppressed by her rulers, Syracuse continued to increase; and between this city and Agrigentum arose a rivalry, which of them should carry the arts and sciences to the highest pitch. Intoxicated with power, the Syracusans now meditated the subjection of all the rest of Sicily. They oppressed the subject cities with heavier taxes. Among these was Leontium, whose inhabitants sent ambassadors to seek for assistance from Athens. The Athenians, fired with the ambition of conquering Sicily, were easily instigated by Alcibiades, notwithstanding the objections of Nicias and the more prudent generals, in sending a powerful force against Syracuse. After some preliminary hostilities, which ended in a temporary peace, a fresh opportunity arose from the invitation of the Segestans. In the second year of the 91st Olympiad (B.C. 415), a splendid fleet sailed out of the harbour of the Piræus, to besiege Syracuse, under the command of Nicias and Alcibiades. It was soon found that little aid could be expected from the Segestans, and Nicias advised that, after enforcing a peace between that people and the Selinuntines, they should return to Athens. Alcibiades, however, overruled this opinion, and the Athenians, after vainly attempting to make allies of the Catanians and Messenians, prepared to undertake the siege. At this period Alcibiades was recalled to Athens, to answer the charge of having defaced the statues of the gods. Condemned to death, he replied, that he would find means of showing them that he was alive. He fled to Sparta, whither the Syracusans had sent to implore assistance, and, stung with revenge, exerted himself as strenuously to relieve Syracuse, as he had instigated the Athenians to attack it.

At that time Syracuse had extended far beyond the island of Ortygia, to which it had been originally confined, and had spread over the ground to the northward, where a second quarter, called

Acradina, had been added, and beyond that, on the high ground, the Epipolæ. The Athenians proceeded to invest the whole city with a wall, a plan which the Syracusans attempted to defeat by running out others across them, so as to intercept the communication. Nevertheless, the Syracusans were so closely pressed that they were about to treat for peace, when Gylippus unexpectedly arrived from Sparta with powerful succours. Nicias now began in his turn to be so distressed, that he wrote to Athens either to withdraw the army or to send reinforcements, requesting at the same time to be relieved from the command.

In the following spring, Demosthenes was sent with fresh ships and succours. Hitherto the struggle had been carried on chiefly by land: the great harbour now became the scene of obstinate conflict, where the Syracusan and Athenian galleys encountered each other with varying success. At length the Athenian fleet was utterly defeated; and the triumphant Syracusans closed up the mouth of the harbour, to prevent the escape of their enemies. In this fearful position the Athenians had no alternative but to force the passage, or to burn their ships and endeavour to escape by land. Accordingly, they got ready one hundred and ten vessels, and rowed for the mouth of the harbour, the Syracusans and Corinthians following them. The Athenians at first drove back their pursuers, and had begun to remove the vessels, when the battle became general, and was disputed with extraordinary fury. The Athenians were aware that their lives depended upon the cast, the Syracusans that their enemies were almost in their power. Cries of encouragement or grief arose from the Athenian troops as the struggle alternated; and when, at length, the whole of their fleet was seen making for the shore, arose one fearful yell of despair. Nothing now remained but a disastrous retreat; and leaving the dead unburied, and the sick and wounded to the mercy of the enemy, Nicias and Demosthenes fled with their disorganized army towards Catania. At the river Asinarius they were over-

taken by Gylippus, and compelled to surrender at discretion. The Spartan general wished to save the lives of Nicias and Demosthenes, but in vain. They were put to death, and the wretched prisoners, seven thousand in number, imprisoned among the damp and gloomy quarries, where many of them perished miserably. The rest, after seventy days, were sold for slaves. It is said that some who escaped, afterwards waited on the tragic poet Euripides, and assured him that by singing snatches of his verses they had often obtained kind treatment at the hands of the Sicilians.

Amidst the exultation caused by this remarkable deliverance, the Syracusans were menaced by a second invasion of the Carthaginians. After the defeat of the Greeks, the Selinuntines continued so bitterly to oppress the Segestans, that the latter implored the succour of these dangerous allies. Selinunte and Agrigentum were taken, and the whole island was overrun by the victorious Carthaginians. At this crisis arose another deliverer, the famous Dionysius. He declared war against Carthage, unless she would consent to a total evacuation of Sicily; and when the Carthaginians, with an immense force, again appeared in the harbour and before the walls, he routed them with immense slaughter; and though unable to expel them from the island, succeeded in preserving the liberties of Syracuse. This extraordinary man, who had to overawe a turbulent democracy, is represented as despotic and cruel, yet was of a generous and princely nature, delighting in philosophy and the arts. Great as a warrior, he had a mania for poetizing, his chief ambition being to carry off the prize at the Olympic games; and although the people hissed his verses, he persevered till one of his tragedies had obtained the prize. He invited Plato, who had come to ascend Etna, to visit him, but their good understanding was but of short duration. The conversation turning one day on the tyrannide, the philosopher boldly pronounced it to be incompatible with virtue. "You speak like a madman," said Dionysius.

"And you like a tyrant," retorted Plato, who was immediately sent back to Greece.

Nor was the philosopher more fortunate in shaping the character of his successor, Dionysius II. Dion, the friend of Plato, of the popular party, and adorned with every noble quality, was at first the confidant and guide of the youthful monarch, and at his suggestion the philosopher was invited to Syracuse. A public festival honoured his arrival, and the youthful tyrant, whose manners were revoltingly dissolute, affected to be enamoured of the Platonic philosophy. But the enemies of Dion poisoning his ear, he treacherously seized and banished him to Greece. Plato demanded his recal; the tyrant temporized, and the indignant philosopher returned home. He was a second time invited, on an express promise that Dion should be restored to his country; but the tyrant was false to his promise a second time, and the philosopher took his final leave of Sicily. Dionysius now showed his enmity to Dion by seizing his property and ill-treating his relations, until the banished nobleman, who had been received with the highest honours in Greece, had no alternative but to return with a body of auxiliaries and vindicate his rights. He was warmly received by the popular party, and Dionysius was compelled to take refuge in the citadel. A revolution now took place. Democracy triumphed, and the eyes of Greece were fixed upon Dion, who shortly fell, too noble a victim, by a revulsion of that popular caprice which so suddenly raised him to the summit of power.

Dionysius, freed from restraint, now gave such loose to his passions, that the best of the Syracusans fled to Corinth, and implored deliverance from his yoke, while at the same time Iceta had invited the Carthaginians to reconquer Sicily. The noble Timoleon was sent for the deliverance of Syracuse and of Sicily. He expelled the invaders; and as Syracuse, owing to its desolating feuds, had become so depopulated that the grass grew in its principal streets, he restored the fugitive Syracusans scattered

throughout Greece, with other colonists, to reestablish themselves in their original home. The Carthaginians again returning to Sicily, he defeated them in a great battle, put down the other tyrants of Sicily, engaged the different cities in one common league, and invited large colonies of Grecians to infuse fresh blood into the desolated country, which rapidly regained its former splendour. After this glorious career he surrendered his authority, and retiring to a beautiful villa near Syracuse, the gift of the people, ended his days as a private citizen, the Washington of the ancient world.

The republic left by Timoleon was speedily overthrown by Agathocles, who usurped the reins of government,—an extraordinary man, of whom we know not whether most to admire the daring heroism, or detest the atrocious cruelty. The Carthaginians again invading Sicily, Agathocles adopted the daring idea of carrying the war over into Africa. His brilliant but sanguinary career was cut short by death.

Shortly afterward began the protracted struggle between Rome and Carthage, in which Sicily speedily became involved. The democratic faction, carried away by the successes of Hannibal in Italy, embraced the cause of the Carthaginians, and the Roman general Marcellus was sent to besiege Syracuse. He invested it at once by land and sea. Lashing his five banked galleys together, he erected wooden towers upon them to attack the walls of Acradina; but Archimedes, the most famous mechanist of the age, was in the city, and by his prodigious resources rendered abortive all the efforts of its assailants. He contrived huge machines, like iron hands, which dropped from the walls, grappled the fore part of the Roman ships, and let them fall into the sea, and set others on fire by concentrating burning glasses upon them. The siege was turned into a blockade. The Carthaginians, who had arrived to succour the Syracusans, encamping in the marshy valley of the Anapus, were fearfully reduced by a pestilential fever. Marcellus, taking advantage of

AMPHITHEATRE

a festival, surprised the Epipolæ. The Carthaginian fleet returned to Africa, and the besieged were about to capitulate on honourable terms, when the troops of Marcellus were admitted within the walls by the treachery of the Syracusan mercenaries. The generous Roman is said to have wept over the fate of the city, which he was unable to preserve from pillage. He gave special orders to spare the life of Archimedes; but while deeply engaged in a geometrical problem, a soldier, unacquainted with his person, rushed in and killed him, to the great regret of Marcellus, who treated his remains with funeral honours, and erected to his memory a splendid tomb.

Thus fell, at length, under the all-absorbing sway of Rome, this great and glorious city, which, during so many centuries, amidst all the changes of government and the ravages of faction, had continued to increase and flourish. Besides giving birth to a long list of illustrious men, the court of its rulers was often the resort of the most famous philosophers and poets of Greece. Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, the Greek pastoral poets, were Sicilian, though Theocritus dwelt chiefly in Alexandria. Art, science, and agriculture were in the highest state of perfection; and it is said by Polybius, that the Romans first acquired a taste for sculpture by seeing the precious works of art which, after the sack, were carried away from Syracuse to adorn the metropolis of the victors.

Syracuse was still an important and populous city when the ship which bore St. Paul from Melita to Puteoli put into the harbour and remained there two days, bringing, probably, the first tidings of Christianity to Sicily. With the decline of the empire it fell into decay—was the seat of an Emir under the Saracens—till, finally, the Emperor Charles V., demolishing its outworks, surrounded the island of Ortygia with strong fortifications; and thus, at the present day, after the revolutions of ages, the city is confined to the same narrow limits occupied by its original colonists.

In surveying the few remains of Syracuse, let us turn first to the antiquities comprised within the modern town. Of the famous temple of Diana there remain but insignificant vestiges. The modern cathedral occupies the site of the temple of Minerva, and its northern side exhibits a range of noble Doric columns. The building was entire till after the Norman conquest, but the roof fell in the year 1100, during the celebration of mass, and crushed the congregation. The famous fountain of the nymph Arethusa, one of the Sicelides, transformed into this stream by Diana, and the patron goddess of the Sicilians, formerly filled with shoals of sacred fishes, has, alas! degenerated into a washing-tank, frequented by the nymphs of modern Syracuse, whose manners and aspect are the very reverse of poetical. The Castle, which occupies the extreme point of the island, is generally attributed to the Byzantine general, Maniaces; but the great hall and portal are supposed by Mr. Knight to be the work of the Normans. In this castle died the famous Dutch admiral De Ruyter, after his engagement with the French; and in the harbour Lord Nelson watered his fleet before sailing in pursuit of the French at Aboukir.

Sallying out of the town, we enter upon a partially cultivated tract, formerly the quarter of Neapolis, built after Ortygia and Acradina. The first monument that attracts attention is the Amphitheatre, which is in a tolerably perfect state, but of dimensions far too limited for the teeming population of the city in its most palmy days, and attributed with reason to the period of its decadence under the Romans.

Not far distant is the Greek theatre, entitled "maximum" by Cicero, and the largest in all Sicily. Here the aged Timoleon harangued the citizens of the revived republic, and here also the popular assemblies were held in the time of Agathocles. Its origin is very ancient. It is of horseshoe form, about a hundred and sixteen feet in diameter, and would accommodate eighty thousand spectators. It stands on rocky, rising ground, out of

THE PRISONS

which it is partly hewn; and the view over the ancient city must, in its pristine splendour, have been magnificent indeed. Connected with this theatre is an aqueduct, constructed by Carthaginian prisoners. We now ascend to the Tyche and

THEATRE OF SYRACUSE.

Epipolæ, by a picturesque path cut through the solid rock; on the right of which is the Nymphæum, supplied by the above-mentioned aqueduct, while each of the rocky walls is delved into small sepulchres.

Not far hence are the Latomia, or the quarries from which the ancient city was built, which present a series of strikingly picturesque scenes, resembling natural caverns with hanging stalactites, supported upon slender pillars, and vividly reflected in pools of water, and at present occupied as a rope-walk. They were formerly used as prisons; but whether the one here represented is the same in whose dank, unwholesome air

perished so many of the unhappy Athenian prisoners, seems doubtful, some antiquaries, from Greek inscriptions found there, supposing those nearer the Capucin convent to be the scene of their incarceration. Connected with these is the extraordinary spot called the "Ear of Dionysius." This excavation is nearly sixty feet in height, gradually tapering to a point, from which a narrow channel serves as a conductor of sound to a small chamber near the top of the rock. In this the Syracusan tyrant, as is said, with but little probability, was accustomed to post himself, and listen to the conversation of the prisoners confined below. The only access at present to the chamber is by means of a rope and chair. Undoubtedly, the conversation of persons standing below is quite audible. Mrs. Starke affirms that the sound produced by tearing a piece of dry paper is distinctly heard; and that the echo of a pistol shot is as loud as that of a cannon ball. Whisperings, however, are said to be entirely inaudible. The cavern below winds sinuously into the rock to the depth of two hundred and ten feet, and is furnished with a small bath.

Another very picturesque quarry is that near the Capucin convent. This deep excavation is now rendered a delicious place of resort, being filled with the most luxuriant vegetation imaginable.

When Cicero was quæstor in Sicily, he discovered the tomb of Archimedes, by its mathematical inscription:—

> "'Twas ever thus. As now at Virgil's tomb
> We bless the shade, and bid the verdure bloom;
> So Tully paused, amid the wrecks of time,
> On the rude stone to trace the truth sublime,
> When at his feet, in honour'd dust disclosed,
> The immortal Sage of Syracuse reposed!"
>
> ROGERS, *Pleasures of Memory.*

The traditional tomb of the great mathematician is still to be seen, but the best Sicilian antiquaries place but little confidence in its authenticity.

EAR OF DIONYSIUS.

The real size of many famous cities is rendered doubtful by the destruction of their walls; but we have ocular proof of the immense extent of Syracuse in the remains of its outer circuit of fortifications. It is quite a long ride from the modern town to the extremity of the ancient city. Passing up the Street of Tombs, we come upon the high ground of the Epipolæ, the last part of the city, after the siege by the Athenians, enclosed. It was here, according to Diodorus, that Dionysius, when threatened by the Carthaginians, caused a wall seven miles long to be erected in twenty days, by the combined labours of six thousand masons, two hundred peasants, six thousand oxen, a great number of stone-cutters, and an overseer to every acre. Be this as it may, the extent of this outer wall is surprising; and in some places it is nine feet thick, as may be seen by the plan. Every atom of what it formerly enclosed is vanished, except traces of foundations and wheel-tracks deeply worn in the rock. Here are shown memorials of the famous sieges; the spots where the Athenians attacked the city by means of building a wall, which the Syracusans destroyed by night, and the very breach by which the soldiers of Marcellus surprised the Epipolæ. Here, too, is to be seen a quarry where Dionysius imprisoned some philosophers for not admiring his verses. At the extreme point of the long ridge was Fort Labdalus, the strongest in all the city. Here, seated upon one of the huge square blocks, luxuriantly overgrown with wild flowers, which would form the pride of an English conservatory, we can trace the wall running above the rich, but unwholesome, valley of the Anapus, which proved so fatal to the Carthaginians, down to the little island of Ortygia, the original nucleus, as it is now the sole remaining portion of the immense city, of which, but for the evidence of its walls, the very existence may well seem doubtful. The great harbour, so often the scene of conflict, expands—a sheet of placid silver—in the distance; and on the bare, barren point opposite to Ortygia was pitched the camp of Nicias and

Demosthenes, from whence they commenced their terrible retreat. Such once *was* Syracuse. No mounds like those of Egypt and Assyria cover the site of its palaces and temples; its very dust seems swept away, and the rocky soil restored to the wild beauty of primitive nature.

There are a few other objects worthy the attention of travellers, such as the river Anapus, upon whose marshy banks still flourishes the papyrus, supposed originally to have been sent from Egypt by Ptolemy Philadelphus as a present to King Hiero, from which paper has been made by Signor Politi, the best *cicerone* in Syracuse: some trifling remains of the temple of Jupiter, from which Dionysius stole the mantle of gold which covered the shoulders of the tutelary deity, observing that the Son of Saturn had a garment too heavy for summer and too cold for winter, and should, therefore, be provided with one made of woollen cloth, fit for both seasons. This statue was finally purloined by the rapacious Verres. The catacombs beneath the Church of St. John well deserve a visit, being a complete subterranean city, with avenues branching off in different directions, containing a vast number of sepulchral niches and chambers.

Few, indeed, will be inclined to protract their stay in so dreary and sickly a place as modern Syracuse: and after devoting a day or two to the examination of the antiquities, we prepared to continue our journey. As the carriage road does not extend beyond Syracuse, and there is only a mule path to Girgenti, and thence nearly all the way to Palermo, a journey of about a fortnight, it became necessary to decide whether to hire a lettiga, or to ride. The former is just the ancient lectica, or modern sedan, carried by a couple of stout mules, with a pyramid of jingling bells; a lazy, drowsy sort of conveyance, fit only for women, invalids, and priests. I preferred to hire mules, under the care of a mnleteer well recommended to me, and who did justice to his recommendation. Had I been

VIEW FROM FORT LABDALUS

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VIEW FROM FORT LABDALUS

better acquainted with the miserable accommodations of the inns, I should have added a tent, mattress, and bedding, and a small stock of provisions, just, in fact, as if travelling in Palestine; though with a single muleteer this would have proved a little difficult and expensive. A party, however, should always do so, as it renders them independent, and enables them to choose their

ground; but they must be on their guard against malaria. Every one, too, should provide himself with a pair of sheets, sewed together on all sides but one, and drawn with strings like a bag, and in this tie himself up at night, so that the vermin cannot get at him.

Among the other annoyances of Sicilian travel are the numerous *fiumara*, or water-courses, which descend from the mountains into the sea. Even on the line of carriage-road, it is often impossible to bridge them over, from their immense width, and the mass of stones and *débris* that they hurry down in their headlong course. In the drought of summer they are for the most part dry and practicable; but in stormy weather the

traveller's carriage is often arrested in the midst of one of these shallow, but furious torrents; the baggage has to be taken off, and the passengers, male or female, precariously carried pick-a-back through the foaming waters and deposited on dry land, while the driver, up to his middle, by dint of whipping, and yelling, and pushing the wheels behind, succeeds in working his vehicle across the miry stream.

In the wilder parts of the island, where there is merely a mule-track, and but few bridges, the horseman is sometimes kept waiting for a day or two at a miserable fleabitten hovel, until some swollen torrent has subsided enough to allow him to ford it with safety.

These *fiumara* occur, of course, chiefly during the heavy rains, between the months of November and March. Far more formidable visitations are the waterspouts, to which Sicily is often subject. One of these terrible visitations occurred last year in the neighbourhood of Palermo, and occasioned a fearful loss of life and destruction of property.

I shall spare the reader a detailed account of our progress from Syracuse to Girgenti, in which we made full proof of the deplorable filth and misery of the interior of the island. Suffice it to say

that we passed the first night at Palazzolo, the second at Biscari, and the third at Terranova. The first was bad, the second worse, but the third so utterly insupportable, that to escape the onslaught of the vermin, I ordered the mules in the middle of the night, and departed. No sooner on horseback, however, than the sense of fatigue returns with increased force, and one rides on half asleep, and at every moment ready to drop, until the rising sun awakens a forced and feverish activity; and so one goes forward the whole day under the blazing heat. Well might Sancho exclaim, "Blessed is the man that invented sleep!" The converse is here the case, and one can only utter impotent maledictions at those who are skilled in murdering it, and envy in vain that happy insensibility of hide to which the natives have at length attained. Neither is one indemnified for want of sleep by the abundance and delicacy of provisions, since, for the most part, these filthy caravansaries are entirely destitute. The traveller is reduced to forage for himself; and if he obtain a little bread, and eggs, and a bottle of decent wine to wash it down with, may consider himself exceedingly fortunate.

Terranova is supposed to occupy the site of the ancient Gela, and it was in the neighbouring fields that Æschylus, as it is said, met his death by the fall of a tortoise upon his head. Neither this place, nor Alicata, nor Palma, which succeed to it, presents, at the present day, any object of the slightest interest. The track is very solitary, and it is but rarely that the passenger falls in with anything but a flock of silken-haired goats, and a shepherd wrapped in his huge brown cloak and sheepskin leggings. But the wild heaths over which the road passes are fragrant with myrtle, and in the season of spring the whole face of the country is enamelled with hyacinths. Through scenery thus wildly pleasing, the traveller, after a long and wearisome pilgrimage, comes at length in sight of the white walls of Girgenti.

CHAPTER V.

GIRGENTI — SITUATION — HISTORICAL DETAILS — TEMPLE OF JUNO LUCINA — TEMPLE OF CONCORD, TEMPLE OF JUPITER, ETC.—SCIACCA—SELINUNTE—SEGESTE—ROAD TO PALERMO.

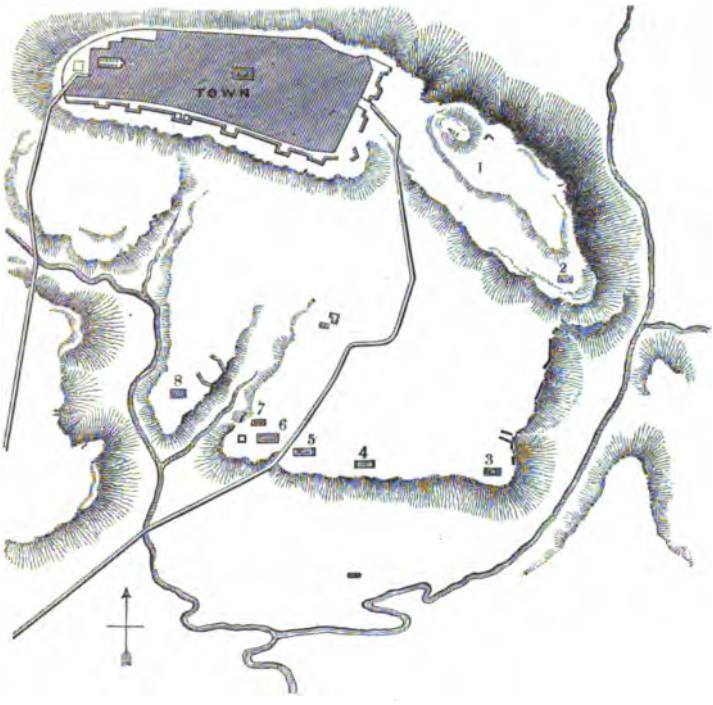
On approaching the ancient Agrigentum, the eye takes in at a glance its noble and happily chosen situation. It stood on an immense platform, everywhere defended by precipitous rocks, the highest part 1,200 feet above the sea, about two miles distant, of which, and all the surrounding country, it commands a magnificent prospect. Perhaps, before giving a brief description of its monuments, it may be better to explain its topography by means of a map, to which the reader may afterwards turn for elucidation of the details. By referring to this it will be seen that the principal temples range along the edge of the southern and eastern cliff, while the site of the modern town, occupying the extreme summit, was the Acropolis of the ancient city of the Greeks.

The mule-path from Palma, leading over wild heaths, bright with patches of flowers, crosses the little river Biaggio, and clambering up the abrupt face of the rock, enters the city near one of the ancient gates. This is the point of view chosen for the annexed illustration. The roofless temple of Juno Lucina, and that of Concord, still in a state of complete preservation, stand on the edge of the rock, connected by the city wall, which formerly swept round the brink of the still loftier precipice up to the Rupe Atenea and the Acropolis, now occupied by the clustering white buildings of the mediæval and modern town. This, of course, occupies but a mere corner of the

APPROACH TO GIRGENTI

ancient city, said to have been several miles in circumference, and to have had a population of two hundred thousand souls.

Threading the zigzag path which surmounts the precipice, we traversed what was formerly the interior of the city, now



1. RUPE ATENEA. 2. TEMPLE OF MINERVA. 3. TEMPLE OF JUNO.
4. TEMPLE OF CONCORD. 5. TEMPLE OF HERCULES. 6. TEMPLE OF JUPITER.
7. TEMPLE OF CASTOR AND POLLUX. 8. TEMPLE OF VULCAN.

covered with luxuriant groves of fig, orange, and olive. It was now the middle of February, and yet the sky was of as cloudless a blue, the atmosphere as soft, and the face of nature as smiling as in the finest days of a northern summer. The almond-trees were in full blossom, and every crevice among the rocks was filled with brilliant patches of odoriferous hyacinths. Through this delicious scenery, with the sunny sea outspread in the distance, we passed into the modern town, which is as

foul and fœtid as the face of nature is fair and smiling. Never, perhaps, was there a contrast more striking, than between the luxury of ancient Agrigentum, and the nastiness of modern Girgenti. Happily, the inn was full, and the muleteer, with some difficulty, obtained an apartment in a private house, which proved unexpectedly clean, and, moreover, commanded a splendid view over the temples and the distant sea.

Of all the colonies founded by the Greeks in Sicily, Agrigentum, if not the most powerful, was the most proverbial for the elegance and luxury of its citizens. An ancient city is said to have existed here before their times, built by Cocalus, King of Sicania, who employed Dædalus to erect for him an impregnable fortress, with a labyrinth, in the Cretan fashion, upon the loftiest part of the rock. At length, a Rhodian or Ionian colony, struck with the advantages of the site, transferred thither the arts and manners of Greece. Owing to its vicinity to the sea, the richness of the surrounding country, and the trade that sprang up with Carthage, it soon became wealthy and flourishing. The government, like that of the other Grecian colonies, was oligarchical, until the reins of power were seized by Phalaris, whose name has become proverbial for cruelty. It was to this tyrant that Perillus made a present of the brazen bull, into which, when heated red-hot, the victims of his cruelty were to be thrown, their groans resembling those of the animal; a refinement of cruelty to which Phalaris made the inventor the first victim.

The tyrant being killed in a popular insurrection, the Agrigentines regained their liberty; but after an interval of a century and a half, fell under the sway of Theron, who largely extended his dominion, and carried the splendour of Agrigentum to its highest pitch. It became proverbial for the Sybarite luxury of its citizens, and the accounts left to us of their style of living are almost incredible. Plato declared that "they built as if they thought themselves immortal, and ate as if they

TEMPLE OF JUNO.

expected never to eat again." Diodorus says, that one of the citizens, returning victorious from the Olympic games, was followed by a train of three hundred cars, each drawn by four white horses sumptuously caparisoned. He adds, that the horses of Agrigentum were highly prized, and that monuments to a favourite courser were often erected by the citizens. Some idea of the effeminacy of their habits may be formed from the instructions given to the sentinels, who were allowed to carry for their comfort *only* a certain quantity of bedding.

But it was not only for luxurious refinement that the Agrigentines were remarkable. Many of the citizens were distinguished for their progress in the arts and sciences, the most famous of all being Empedocles, who was not only the liberator of his country by substituting a more liberal government for the oligarchy, but was at once celebrated for his attainments in astronomy, history, physic, rhetoric, philosophy, poetry, and music. Gellias was no less celebrated throughout Sicily for his enormous wealth and magnificent hospitality. It is said that his person so little corresponded with his wide-spread reputation, that when sent ambassador to a neighbouring state, the senators could not refrain from laughing. Gellias with ready wit replied, that they must not be surprised at the meanness of his appearance, for the Agrigentines always sent their comeliest men as ambassadors to the noblest cities, while to those that were insignificant, they contented themselves with despatching such messengers as himself.

The Carthaginians, upon the revolution of the Segestans, invaded Sicily, and after having destroyed Selinunte and Imera, Amilcar, then general, next turned his arms against Agrigentum. The citizens had made every preparation to receive him. They took into pay Decippus the Spartan with 1,500 mercenaries, and also 800 Campanians, who had deserted from the Carthaginians, and who were posted on the Rock Atenea. Amilcar surrounded the city with his troops, and erected wooden towers to storm

the weakest parts of the wall, but the besieged made a nocturnal sally and burnt them. He next began to pull down the tombs, in order to erect some stone works against the walls. While thus demolishing the sepulchre of Theron, a thunderbolt fell on them, which, with a malignant disease that broke out in the camp, appeared to the panic-stricken Carthaginians as a judgment against them. They left off, therefore, destroying the tombs, and sacrificed a boy to Saturn to turn aside the anger of the gods.

Meanwhile the Syracusans marched with a strong force to raise the siege. A battle took place in sight of the walls; the Carthaginians were routed and besieged in their own camp, where they were soon reduced to the utmost distress for provisions. From this they were relieved by the activity of Imilco, who, learning from a deserter that a Syracusan fleet was on its way to carry succour to the besieged, intercepted it with forty of his galleys from Panormus and Motya, and gained a complete victory. The tables were now turned, and after a siege of eight months, the downfall of Agrigentum could no longer be averted. Decippus and the other mercenaries seeing this, and bribed by Imilco, passed over to the Carthaginian service—alleging as a pretext the scarcity of provisions. This induced the Agrigentines to institute an examination, when it was found that there remained only enough for a few days' supply. The crowded and luxurious population (to quote in full the language of the historian Palmeri,) could not bear the idea of any stint. It was resolved to abandon the city under cover of the night. On the publication of this decree, the streets and houses resounded with cries of desperation, and unavailing lamentation. It was a mournful spectacle to see 200,000 citizens, of every age, sex, and condition, abandoning with tears their household gods,—noble matrons, beautiful virgins, innocent children—the old and the young, the slave and his master, the plebeian with the patrician, passing instantaneously from the summit of luxury to the extreme of wretchedness. The whole body, escorted by the

militia, retired to Gela, whence the Syracusans conducted them to Leontium.

Next morning the Carthaginians, not without apprehension of surprise, entered the city. They put to death some few citizens who had not abandoned it, perhaps from inability to travel, or because the love of their country was stronger in their breasts than the fear of death. Among them was the noble and most hospitable Gellias, who had retreated with his family and treasures into the temple of Minerva, in the hope that the Carthaginians would have respected his asylum. Seeing that the other temples were being sacked by them, he set fire to that in which he was, and perished. Besides money, immense was the quantity of pictures, statues, ornaments, and furniture, which fell into the hands of the Carthaginians; and among the spoil was the famous bronze bull of Perillus, which they took away with them to Africa. Having sacked the city, Imilco proceeded to destroy the magnificent temples in the city and its environs, sparing, however, the houses as affording winter quarters for his troops. Thus in the ninety-third Olympiad fell the pride and splendour of Agrigentum.

When the Carthaginians were at length expelled, a colony returned and reoccupied the city, which rapidly regained its former consequence.

During the first Punic War Agrigentum became the object of contention between the Carthaginians and Romans. The former occupied it 262 B.C. with 50,000 of their own soldiers, and half that number of citizens, and the Roman Consuls besieged it with 100,000 men. Unable even with this large army to reduce it by force, they endeavoured to do so by famine, and for five months intercepted all supplies sent to the besieged, who were reduced to the greatest extremity. The Carthaginian senate sent Hanno to their relief with 50,000 foot, 6,000 horse, and seventy elephants. The Romans, in great distress for provisions, were now about to raise the siege, when Hanno, not aware that their extremity must

force them to retire, and desirous of relieving the garrison without delay, offered them battle. At the first onset the African vanguard were broken, and the elephants, terrified at the outcries of the Romans, turned round and fled, throwing the main body into confusion, and helping to complete the rout of the Carthaginians, who left their camp a recompense for the victors. During the following night, Annibal contrived to steal through the besieging army and escape, while the Romans entered the city in triumph after a seven months' siege, in which they had lost more than 30,000 soldiers. Such are the most memorable incidents in the annals of Girgenti. After this period it fell under the Roman sway, and at the fall of the Empire became the seat of a Saracen Emir.

COIN OF GIRGENTI.

To those who have more than one day to spare at Girgenti, it is advisable to obtain the valuable services of Signor Politi, whose guide book, besides, contains the fullest information on the subject. But in order to *enjoy* Girgenti, it is not enough to have a whole chapter of antiquities incessantly dinned into one's ears; it is the beauty of the spot, the romantic and ever-varying combinations of scenery and ruin—the light—the flowers and air—the sunshine, and the poetry, that will live in the traveller's recollection when all archæological details are forgotten. On this point we shall deal mercifully with the reader, being rather anxious to

TEMPLES OF JUNO LUCINA

and Concord

convey a general idea of the place and its beauties, than to usurp the office of a local cicerone.

Sallying out of the town to the eastward, we first directed our steps to the Rupe Atenea, the bold and precipitous rock which forms the north-west angle of the site, and on which formerly stood two temples, but very trifling remains, or rather mere traces, of which at present exist. These were, first, the temple of Jupiter and Minerva, where Gellias, on the capture of the city, was consumed with all his family and treasures; the second, at the extreme angle of the rock, was dedicated to Ceres and Proserpine, and is connected with a wooden chapel. The view from this angle of the rock is strikingly magnificent.

Still following its crest we come to the south-east angle of the rock upon which Agrigentum was situated. Here the combination of scenery is indeed unequalled.

Imagine a long ridge towering above the plain below, almost covered with palmetto shrubs and odoriferous wild flowers, which start from every crevice in the rock, and fill the air around with intoxicating sweetness. On the commanding brink of this precipice, separated by a short interval, stand two temples of Doric architecture, the nearer, dedicated to Juno Lucina, presenting an incomparably picturesque group of columns, some upright and others prostrate, or thrown in wild confusion around—the second, called that of Concord, still apparently entire. The colouring of these edifices, a pale golden amber, is relieved by the soft, yet brilliant sunshine, which defines every detail of the architecture, and every ruined fragment, and every fallen stone, with an effect indescribably resplendent. But it is the combination of these temples with the scenery around them that renders this part of Girgenti almost unique in beauty. Never perhaps was there an instance in which the admirable taste of the Greeks in the position of their edifices was more remarkably displayed than here. Art and nature are made mutually to enhance each other. From whatever point we view the temples, they are a glorious adorn-

ment of the scene; while the view from them is no less magnificent and commanding over plains, valleys and mountains around whose every outline is romantic, and the distant sea, of a soft and slumberous azure, which expands towards the southern horizon. It is in the midst of such a scene that we may comprehend something of the life of the ancient Greeks, and that intense feeling for beauty which was the predominant element of their existence.

It was in this very temple of Juno Lucina, (which appears in the foreground of the view,) that Zeuxis the painter, desirous of executing a picture of the goddess of which the ideal perfection should transcend any single instance of mortal charms, caused the choicest virgins of Agrigentum to appear before him in unadorned beauty, selecting from them five to serve as especial models, and, combining that which in each was most remarkable, completed a work which, preserved on the northern wall of the interior, formed one of the master-pieces of the ancient world.

The ruins of this temple are so inimitably picturesque that a second view is requisite to convey an idea of them. Besides the lateral view, with the temple of Concord in the distance, the eastern or principal façade is also selected. In front of this evidently existed a court, the remains of which, overgrown with palmetto and hyacinth, form a very picturesque foreground. The sun is represented as I saw it, setting in the distant sea, with a gorgeous glow of which no words of mine can convey an idea. These views it should be observed are literally as correct as I could make them, without the slightest attempt at composition or embellishment.

I shall not weary the reader with a lengthened description of this edifice. Suffice it to say that it was of oblong form, being about 154 feet in length, and about 55 in breadth, and that the number of exterior columns was 34. One striking peculiarity is the noble foundation and flight of steps, evidently intended to lift up the building, and give it a command over the

TEMPLE OF CONCORD.

adjacent scenery, while it rendered it more conspicuous at a distance.

Leaving behind us the temple of Juno Lucina, we continue along the edge of the precipice, along which ran the wall of the city. Passing numerous tombs and sepulchres excavated in the solid rock, some supposed by antiquaries to be of Grecian and others of Roman origin, in a few minutes we reach the temple of Concord.

This edifice, supposed by many to have been erected after the Punic War, is, with the exception of the roof and some small portions, still entire; and although, not being of the colossal dimensions of the temples of Pæstum, it has not their majestic grandeur, it is still a very beautiful and harmonious specimen of the Grecian Doric architecture. It stands in lonely beauty near the edge of the rock, silent and forsaken, except by flocks of goats that browse among the odoriferous shrubs. The view presents it from the south-west, and displays the broken scenery of the cliff, bestrewed with huge masses of fallen rock, and the lofty crag upon which is seen in the distance the temple of Juno Lucina.

The popular appellation of the building is unsupported by any inscription or evidence whatsoever, except a Latin tablet found in the city—

CONCORDIÆ AGRIGENTI
NORVM SACRVM
RESPUBLICA LILYBITANO
RVM DEDICANTIBVS
M. HATERIO CANDIDO PROCOS.
ET L. CORNELIO MARCELLO Q.
PR . V . PR.
Δ

A Roman inscription, as it has been remarked, would not belong to the period of its foundation, and it has been therefore supposed that it alluded to some other edifice. Some believe the building to have been dedicated to Ceres.

Of all the temples of Agrigentum, that dedicated to Jupiter was by far the most colossal in scale, though not the best in style; but it is now a shapeless heap of ruins, the fragments of which, nevertheless, amply demonstrate its former grandeur. It was about 360 feet in length, or more than double the size of the temple of Concord or that of Juno Lucina. According to Diodorus, the channels of its columns were large enough for a man to stand in,—a statement corroborated by the scale of the fragments. The edifice stood on a flight of steps, and had two fronts, the pediments of both being adorned with splendid sculptures,—those on the eastern representing the War of the Giants, and those on the western the Capture of Troy. The fragments of one of the Caryatides, formerly (as is supposed) supporting the pediment, have been put together by Signor Politi, and is twenty-seven feet in length. The execution is coarse and clumsy, and it appears to have been once covered over with stucco; but the colossal scale well justifies the vulgar appellation given to it,—"the Palace of the Giants."

The other remains at Agrigentum are inconsiderable. Of the temple of Hercules but a single column is now standing. In this building stood the famous statue, of the attempt to steal which by Verres such a lively description is left us by Cicero. Of the temple of Æsculapius there remains but a picturesque fragment of two Doric columns and a portion of the entablature.

Numerous tombs are delved in the face of the rocks, but there is only one standing which merits any particular attention, and respecting which much curious controversy has arisen. It is popularly called the tomb of Theron, but is certainly too insignificant for so eminent a personage, and does not answer to the description of Diodorus,—that it was a magnificent and elegant structure. Others have supposed that we have here one of those monuments which Diodorus aud Pliny assure us the Agrigentines raised in memory of those generous steeds to which they

TEMPLE OF CASTOR AND POLLUX

were so passionately attached; and if so, it may certainly be regarded as a curiosity unique in architecture. Some antiquaries, however, regard it as of far later date.

Such is a glance at the principal remains of this once splendid and luxurious city. There are some apparently very ancient excavations, which some suppose to be the work of Dædalus, beneath a house in the town; and in the cathedral is an ancient sarcophagus, now serving as a font, covered with sculpture relating to the story of Phædra and Hippolytus; while the public library contains a collection of coins.

The road from Girgenti to Sciacca presents but little interest. The first place is Siculiana, the vicinity of which is famous for its sulphur mines. At the small town of Monte Allegro, or the "Pleasant Mountain," we passed the night in a miserable locanda, and next morning pursued the road to Sciacca. At a short distance on the left, at the mouth of the river Platani, was the site of Heraclea, which, according to some antiquaries, was called Minoa after Minos the Cretan.

We reached Sciacca early in the afternoon, and found an inn which externally looked more promising than our last abiding place, but which, in the prime article of vermin, fully equalled, if, indeed, it did not surpass it. It is but just to the poor innkeeper to say that, case-hardened himself, he conscientiously believed that his beds were free from vermin; and the most rigorous scrutiny certainly failed to discover any. Having, nevertheless, placed a basin of water by the bedside, as a receptacle of any stragglers, I put out the light, and got into bed; and, whether they crept out of the walls, or dropped from the ceiling certain it is that in half an hour I consigned no less than four-and-twenty of my tormenters to a watery grave. In the morning the host entered with a hesitating smile on his countenance, expressing a trembling hope that I must have passed a quiet night. I contented myself with pointing expressively to the basin, simply repeating the awful words, "*Vinti-quattro:*

vinti-quattro!" "*Oh Dio!*" he wildly reechoed, as he ran to the basin, and obtained ocular demonstration of the fact. He then burst forth with a groan of despair, covered his face with his hands, and rushed madly out of the apartment. I did not get sight of him again until the moment of departure, by which time his paroxysm had subsided, and his countenance assumed an air of placid resignation and melancholy composure. The poor wretch was, I verily believe, without the means of buying us provisions, and we had to go ourselves the evening before in quest of them, returning at last in triumph, the master with a beef-steak upon a skewer, and the man with an enormous bunch of brocoli under his arm.

Sciacca, the birthplace of Agathocles, is a small port, and exhibits some little bustle; but its chief reputation is connected with the hot sulphur baths, on account of which it was called Thermæ Selinuntiæ. The ancient castle and baths of Dædalus, where Minos is said to have been stifled, are about two miles and a half from the town.

"In July 1831," says Mrs. Starke, "the inhabitants of Sciacca were alarmed by repeated shocks of an earthquake, followed by a stupendous column of water rising majestically from the sea, on a spot commonly called La Secca del Corallo, and about two leagues from the beach. This aquatic column was quickly succeeded by the appearance of a considerable island, which rose high from the bosom of the deep, forming itself into the shape of a parallelogram, with a cluster of pointed rocks at one extremity, and at the other a perpendicular mountain, while the centre of the island displayed a tremendous volcano, ejecting to an immense height in the air flames and red-hot stones, together with showers of ashes, which, in falling, assumed the shape of ostrich feathers. The cluster of pointed rocks, when the volcano raged furiously, was tinted with all the vivid colours usually produced by sulphur, and the sky and the waves were tinged with crimson. The existence of this island was, however,

[illegible] he wildly reechoed, as he ran to [illegible] ocular demonstration of the fact. He [illegible] a [illegible] of [illegible] pair, covered his face with [illegible] out of the apartment. I did not [illegible] the moment of departure, by [illegible] subsided, and his countenance [illegible] and melancholy composure. [illegible] without the means of [illegible] ourselves the evening [illegible] at last in triumph, the master [illegible] skewer, and the man with an enormous [illegible] his arm.

[illegible] of Agathocles, is a small port, and [illegible] its chief reputation is connected [illegible] of which it was called [illegible] baths of Daedalus, [illegible] about two miles

[illegible] habitants of Sciacca [illegible] Carthaginian, followed by [illegible] jestically from the sea, on a spot [illegible] del Corallo, and about two leagues [illegible] This aquatic [illegible] was quickly succeeded [illegible] appearance of a [illegible] island, which rose high [illegible] ing itself into the shape [illegible] pointed rocks at one extremity [illegible] lender mountain, while the [illegible] as volcano, ejecting to [illegible] d-hot stones, [illegible] assumed the shape [illegible] pointed rocks, when the [illegible] with all the vivid colours [illegible] by [illegible] sky and the waves were [illegible] son. [illegible] this island was, however,

TEMPLE OF JUPITER

transient, for in December 1831, even before its name had been settled, it sank back into the bosom of the deep."

Having a long day's ride before us, we left our wretched quarters with the dawn, and in the afternoon drew near to Selinunte. The clouds had been for some time gathering, and as the ruins came in sight, the storm burst on us in all its fury. No building was at hand but a farm-house, which seemed to be abandoned. The rain continued to pour down, and eight miles yet remained to Castel Vetrano, our destined halting-place for the night. To examine the ruins under such circumstances was impossible; but one parting view I determined to enjoy in

defiance of wind and tempest. Drawing down over my head the hood of a heavy Sicilian cloak, I clambered with some difficulty to one of the few pillars yet remaining upright amidst a wilderness of fallen blocks, and obtained a view over the wide-spread mass of ruins, the sublimity of which was infinitely heightened by the wildness of the passing storm, the deluge of rain, the masses of drifting clouds, and the angry foam-covered sea, which formed the background of the picture. Several large

temples spread over the desolate plain, but all of them hurled to the ground at one stroke by the terrible earthquake that destroyed Selinunte. The ruins amidst which I stood, well called by the Sicilians "Pileri di Giganti," were those of the colossal temple of the Olympian Jove, no less than 333 feet in length, by nearly 147 in breadth; and some of the blocks and shafts which lay hurled around in tumultuous confusion are of enormous size, one block being forty feet long, seven broad, and three deep. Except the great temple at Agrigentum, this was the largest in all Sicily; and at a short distance are the ruins of two others of scarcely inferior dimensions. In the low ground are seen the ruins of three other sacred edifices. The spot is abandoned in consequence of the unwholesomeness of the air, and what was once Selinunte is given up to utter and awful desolation.

Selinunte is the ancient Selinus. A learned friend remarks that the coins which were made when it was a flourishing Greek city, bear on one side the leaf of the Selinum plant, as a symbol of the name of the place, and they thus give us the true meaning of a word which has been usually translated *parsley*. It is a trefoil or clover. We are told in the second book of the Iliad, in the Catalogue, that when Achilles would not fight, and his soldiers were idling themselves near the tents, their horses stood by the chariots eating lotus and meadow-grown selinum. This passage agrees with the coins in determining that the plant is clover.

I remained until the soaking rain compelled me to retire, and then, with the guide, mounted and rode off in the rain towards Castel Vetrano. The storm cleared off as we approached that little town, but not before it had thoroughly drenched us both. To our unspeakable satisfaction we found the inn tolerably clean; and after drying our garments, contrived to get a decent supper and bed.

Instead of following the coast by way of Marsala and Trapani,

SEGESTE.

we struck across the interior by the way of Salemi, an ancient and picturesque town on the top of a hill, overtopped by the mouldering remains of a mediæval castle, and overlooking a wide expanse of corn-covered plains and hills. At evening we drew near to Calatafimi, passing between hedges of immense aloes; and those who are accustomed to nurse in a tub, as a great rarity, a single specimen of this noble plant, or of the flowering myrtle, would have been enraptured at the spontaneous prodigality of nature under the ripening sun of the south; where the horseman rides carelessly over, and tramples out the scent of flowers that would be preserved with care as the ornaments of an English garden, and where the air of the wild heath is always redolent with musky aromatic perfumes.

The sun was nearly setting when a most majestic vision opened suddenly before our eyes—the temple of Segeste, about four miles distant, standing in lonely sublimity on a lofty precipice, surrounded by an amphitheatre of craggy mountains, closed in by the graceful peaks of Eryx. The startling manner in which we were introduced to this glorious combination of nature and art, produced a most vivid impression, affording another and most striking instance of the manner in which the Greeks placed their edifices, so as to harmonise with and be heightened by the grandeur of the surrounding scenery. After waiting until the last light had faded from the distant temple, we repaired to Calatafimi, where a decent locanda sheltered us for the night, and at an early hour next morning were on our way to the ruins of Segeste.

This republic was perhaps more ancient than any in the island, its origin being involved in the haze of mythological fiction, which attributes its foundation to Egestus or Acestes, the offspring of a Trojan virgin and the little river Crinisus, which, as Virgil relates, embraced her in the form of a dog. Others say that this Egestus was born in Sicily, but of Trojan parentage, and who being recalled to the defence of Troy, returned after

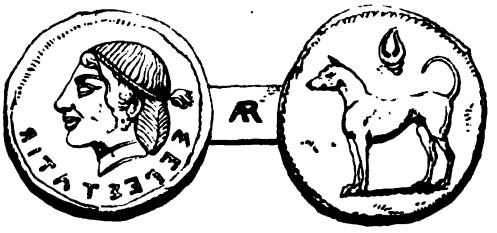
its destruction to this spot with Elimus, and being presented with lands by the Sicani, founded this city in concert with Æneas. Æneas landed at the tower of Segesta or Ægesta—

> "Whose hollow earth Anchises' bones contains,
> And where a prince of Trojan lineage reigns!"

Here the Prophet or Seer advises Æneas to settle, and adds—

> "Here you may build a common town for all,
> And from Acestes' name Acesta call."
>
> *Dryden's Virgil*, book v.

The Asiatic origin of Segeste is shown in the termination of the name upon its coins, which is like the Lycian inscriptions.



This republic became flourishing and important, but the continual quarrels in which it was involved with that of Selinunte, were a constant source of peril for Sicily, and proved in the end the ruin of both cities. It was at the entreaty of the Segestans, as before said, that the Athenians were induced to undertake their disastrous expedition against Syracuse. It was the Segestans, unable to cope with their more powerful rivals, that invited the cooperation of the Carthaginians, who destroyed Selinunte and Agrigentum, and overran the island. By such conduct they brought down upon themselves the vengeance of Agathocles, who devastated their city on returning from his successful expedition against Carthage, and subjected the inhabitants to the most horrible tortures. It arose from its ashes, became involved in the Punic War, and finally yielded to the Romans, who, in

THEATRE AT SEGESTE

consideration of a common origin, invested it with peculiar privileges. With the decline of the empire it struggled through a long period of decadence, until, as supposed, it was finally destroyed by the Saracens.

Four miles along a very romantic road brought us to the great temple, which in its general effect is unquestionably the grandest in the whole island. (See title-page.) Standing on the brink of a profound precipice, and surrounded on all sides with lofty desolate mountains, with little or no vegetation, it impresses the most careless spectator with a feeling of overpowering awe—akin to that which it was intended to produce in the mind of the worshipper of old. The form is simple, the proportions colossal, and the exterior, except the roof, complete. Each pediment is supported by six columns of thirty feet in height, and each side by twelve others. On entering the building, which is 182 feet long, the space within is perfectly vacant, and devoid of any traces of cella, which has led many to regard it rather as a basilica than a temple, or if intended for the latter as never having been finished. Its founder and patron deity are alike unknown, though, from its standing without the wall of the city, it is supposed to have been consecrated to the worship of the goddess Ceres.

Not far from the temple is the theatre, built on the mountain side, which, with the exception of the Scena, is more perfect than any in Sicily, the ranges of seats being very distinct; and, as seen in the engraving, several of the upper seats are backed like chairs.

In the distance of the view appears Mount Eryx, on the summit of which formerly stood the now almost obliterated temple of Venus Erycina, the most sensual of all the heathen establishments. The revenues of several cities were appropriated to its support, its priestesses were chosen for their beauty, and thus it became the favourite resort of the Sicilian debauchees.

Returning from Segeste to Calatafimi, we pursued the high

road to Palermo, which displays a very striking view of the Gulf of Castellamare, and found decent accommodation at the small town of Alcamo.

Next morning we were on our way to the capital at an early hour; crossing a dreary rugged country, the verdant plain of Palermo burst upon our view, a perfect garden of delight, open on the north to the sea, completely sheltered by lofty mountains, on the slope of one of which was seen the cathedral of Monreale, and beyond, on the distant shore, the white buildings and domes of the city itself. It was a lovely scene, and welcome besides as the termination of a journey, which, if it had afforded much enjoyment, had also been accompanied with severe fatigue and privation. Towards evening we reached the gates, and were soon ensconced in the first comfortable hotel we had seen since leaving Syracuse.

PALERMO

CHAPTER VI.

PALERMO—DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY—MARINA—VIEW FROM SANTA MARIA DI GESU—MONTE PELLEGRINO—MONUMENTS—ST. GIOVANNI L'EREMITI—CHAPEL ROYAL—CATHEDRAL—LA MARTORANA—NUNNERY—VISIT TO SAN MARTINO—MONREALE—EXTERIOR—INTERIOR—CLOISTER, ETC.

A GENERAL gloom pervaded the capital of Sicily at the period of my visit. Soon after landing I called upon an English merchant of long standing, and received from him a dismal account of the state of affairs. Many of the most eminent and patriotic noblemen were exiles, and further arrests were continually taking place. Since the last revolution the government, instead of adopting conciliatory measures, were, with their usual blindness, carrying out a reactionary policy, both political and commercial. "We are not far from Barbary, and we are certainly in a state of barbarism," jocosely observed my new acquaintance. Even the post, which reaches Malta from England in eight days, was generally four-and-twenty in getting to Palermo. Sicily seemed quite isolated, and it was the object of government, for obvious reasons, to keep it so. The fear of foreign influence, and dread of constitutional or revolutionary ideas, was the nightmare which constantly haunted the authorities. The hatred of the people was profound, but no one ventured to give it expression; the press, it is needless to say, was gagged, and an incautious word, or even the suspicion of hostile feelings, on the part of the police, was sufficient to procure hopeless incarceration of the victim.

After repairing to the Trinacria Hotel, delightfully situated, overlooking the Marina and the sea, and kept with the greatest comfort and cleanliness, I rambled out to survey the general appearance of the city and its environs.

Palermo is traversed by two long streets, with a handsome circus at the intersection, and forming the principal avenues of traffic and pleasure. The principal, which extends from the Marina to the Palace, is called the "Cassaro," derived from the "Al Cazar," or market of the Saracens. Though not very broad, it is yet somewhat stately in appearance, the basement, principally used as shops, being adorned with handsome portals, surmounted with coats of arms; the first floor, or "piano-nobile," occupied by the more respectable families, furnished with overhanging balconies. But then these gateways are stuck over with bills, these balconies often decorated with pendant strings of macaroni, or festooned with the family linen hung out to dry. Indeed, what may be called the *shirt scenery* of Palermo is quite unique, and may be seen to the greatest advantage in the by-streets, which from one end to the other are overshadowed by the reeking contents of the buck-basket, arranged on lines and poles, with a picturesque intricacy of effect, and play of light and shade and colour, which in its way is remarkably striking. But to return to the Cassaro—perhaps its most remarkable feature, as of the city generally, consists of the ranges of heavy overhanging galleries, enclosed with lattice-work, which occupy the topmost story, belonging to the numerous nunneries with which Palermo abounds, constituting, at least to a Protestant, a very gloomy feature in its social as well as architectural condition. The ground floor is generally used as a shop or café open to the street, and here may be seen groups of soldiers and priests, most of them younger members of noble families, lounging away their time in vacant idleness, while the members of the various trades actively ply their vocation on the footpath, with little regard to the rights of the foot-passengers, who are thus thrust pell-mell into the main causeway among a throng of carriages, carts, and donkeys.

Englishmen are struck in all these southern towns with the mixture of magnificence and meanness, of stench and splendour,

VIEW FROM THE "VICTORIA".

the incongruity of which is so evidently unperceived by the inhabitants themselves. Passing along some back street in Palermo about the hour of the evening drive, you will see an equipage which would do no discredit to Hyde-park, standing at some filthy-looking passage or doorway, down which come presently tripping a lady and gentleman, so elegantly dressed, you only wonder how such distingué-looking personages should inhabit such a sordid-looking abode. The truth is, that a love of dress and show, at the expense of substantial comfort, is characteristic of the Palermitans. Many a poor nobleman will let his *piano-nobile*, and occupy the inferior rooms, in order to maintain a carriage with which he may cut a figure on the Marina. The love of pompous titles is universal; the very tradesmen, according to Smythe, address each other as "most illustrious," while the nobles rejoice in a corresponding profusion of compliments.

Some years ago the streets of Palermo were perfectly overrun with beggars, but this crying evil found at length a remedy in the establishment in 1838 of a Mendicant Asylum, by a patriotic nobleman of Palermo. Here we cannot but remark the number of charitable institutions founded within the last quarter of a century by the wealthier Palermitan nobles and clergy, as highly honourable to that benevolence which forms a striking trait in their character.

The Marina, divided into the upper and lower, is the great boast and pride of the Palermitans, and it must be confessed that it is the most beautiful promenade in Europe. The lower runs along the sea-side, extending from the gate which terminates the principal street, as far as the Botanical Gardens; a footway, well paved and lighted, borders the margin of the bay, the carriage-way is broad and ample, and there are besides avenues of trees for foot-passengers. Above this is a raised terrace, forming the upper Marina, bordered by magnificent houses, among which are the Victoria Hotel and British Consulate, the gardens, or tile-paved courts of

which are separated merely by a light railing from the promenade. But it is the surrounding scenery which constitutes its distinguishing beauty, and of this the reader may in some measure judge by consulting the annexed peep from my window at the Victoria. Here we have the upper and lower Marina, the harbour and lighthouse, while Monte Pellegrino lifts its magnificent mass of huge bare cliffs and precipices in the background. On a spur at its foot is seen Belmonte, a noble villa erected on a site admired by the Emperor of Russia. In the morning and noon the Marina is almost deserted, a few fishermen or straggling pedestrians being its only occupants. It is not until the cool of the evening that all the genteeler portion of the Palermitans pour out of the gate, and begin to throng the footway of the Marina, while a long line of handsome equipages, issuing from every part of the city, completely occupy the road. But it is on moonlight nights that one should repair thither to enjoy southern life in perfection. A stage is erected for a musical band, who execute a variety of operatic pieces; ices and refreshments are provided for those who can indulge in such luxuries; the bay is silvered over, the mountains stand around in shade like giant sentinels, freshness breathes from the water, perfume is in the air, everything around is steeped in beauty, and the heart and senses open to the tenderest and most contagious emotions. Hour after hour is thus passed away, the spot is abandoned with regret, and it is often midnight before the throng reluctantly separate, and the Marina is deserted till the following evening.

At the extremity of the Marina, as before observed, is the Botanical Garden, abounding in close shady avenues of orange and citron, odoriferous shrubs and palmettos, dark groves of cypress, fountains and statues, a perfect Garden of Armida, and a delicious retreat during the blazing hours of noon.

The society of the upper classes in Palermo differs little or nothing from that of Italy. There are but few amusements, and

STA. MARIA DE [illegible]

no regular opera, none of that whirl of intoxicating gaiety which renders Naples so fascinating a place of resort. There is a Casino, to which strangers can always obtain an introduction, and here I had the curiosity to look over the selection of English news contained in the government journal. It consisted simply and solely of two deeply interesting facts—first, that the ministers had been down to Greenwich to eat white-bait, and secondly, that some nameless individual had abandoned the *errors* of Protestantism to return to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church.

The plain behind Palermo is one of the richest in the world, and from whatever point it may be viewed, the city itself appears beautifully situated; but perhaps it nowhere appears to greater advantage than from the convent of Santa Maria di Gesu, about two miles distant at the eastern extremity of the plain. This edifice, of Norman foundation, at the foot of a lofty mountain, is buried in the most beautiful vegetation—cypresses of immense growth, masses of round-topped pine, olives, oleanders, aloes, and vines. One or two specimens of the date-bearing palm, now nearly extinct, yet linger on the soil, as if loth to leave it. In the time of the Saracens this tree was largely cultivated in the neighbouring plain, adding no doubt very greatly to its beauty. Behind the convent rises a pathway, which, climbing the steep side of the mountain, attains at length a small hermitage or chapel, overhung with ivy-covered rocks, and in front of it a gigantic yew-tree. Hence the view extends over the luxuriant plain of Palermo, and its girdle of mountains, while the city itself is seen reposing along the beautiful curve of the bay.

Conspicuous in the background is Monte Pellegrino, somewhat resembling the rock of Gibraltar, and about the same height, the summit being 1,963 feet above the level of the sea below. This remarkable mountain, the ancient Ereta, flanked as it is by inaccessible precipices, offered to the Carthaginians

an almost impregnable stronghold. To the Palermitans it has a far greater interest, being to them a sacred place of pilgrimage, in connexion with their patron saint. According to the authentic "Vita di Santa Rosalia," from which I quote, this glorious virgin was born at Palermo in 1130 of noble progenitors, who could boast of the blood of Charlemagne. Educated with the utmost refinement of the period, she fled at the age of twelve from her father's house to the neighbouring mountains, and passed her whole time in acts of devotion and penance. At length she retired to a cavern on Monte Pellegrino, where she died, without her place of refuge having been discovered. So far the story is probably true enough, but what follows may possibly provoke the doubts of a sceptical mind. During the terrible plague of 1624, when all efforts to stay its ravages proved ineffectual, the saint appeared in a dream to a certain inhabitant of Palermo, and disclosed to him the spot where her mortal relics yet remained unburied, which were reverently gathered up and deposited in the custody of the Archbishop. Still the pestilence refused to leave Palermo, until one day a certain Vincenzo Bonelli, a soap-maker, wandering about the mountain to deplore the loss of his better half, was encountered by a beautiful damsel, who said to him, "Come hither with me, Vincenzo, and I will show you my grotto." Bonelli, all in a tremble, demanded her name. "I am Rosalia," replied the virgin. "Then why," said the soap-maker, plucking up courage to address her, "do you abandon your country to so many afflictions?" "Such has been the will of Heaven," interrupted the saint; "but I am now sent to announce that so soon as my body shall be carried in procession through the city, the pestilence shall cease." She then showed Bonelli her place of retreat, advised him to confide all that he had seen and heard to his confessor, and moreover predicted that in four days he should be with her in Paradise. Bonelli, of course, fulfilled his instructions to the letter, and informed his confessor, who certified the facts

by taking down the deposition in the presence of two pious Capuchins. But the most conclusive evidence, says the narrator, was undoubtedly the death of the soap-maker himself, who died as the saint had prognosticated, just four days after his glorious vision upon the mountain. In obedience to the virgin's will, her bones were now carried in splendid procession through the city, followed by the senate, the clergy, and the people. From that very moment the plague began to diminish, and totally ceased as soon as the precious relics had been duly circulated through the entire extent of the city. No wonder that the pious Palermitans should honour the memory of such a signal deliverance, by a yearly festival which occurs in July, and lasts for several days. A magnificent car is conducted about the city, there are splendid exhibitions of fireworks, and the interior of the cathedral is all in a blaze with 20,000 wax-lights reflected in mirrors, while the whole population of the city, from the highest to the lowest, give themselves up to a frenzy of pious dissipation.

The grotto thus miraculously discovered, is a good way up the mountain, and adorned by a statue of Santa Rosalia covered with a robe of solid gold, while another effigy of her stands in a strikingly picturesque situation on the brink of a tremendous precipice, a sea-mark for the pious mariner, who crosses himself and invokes protection of his patron saint. The view hence is most magnificent, and, independently of pious considerations, will amply repay a pilgrimage. The ascent is rendered easy for mules by a noble causeway, which ascends the steep slope of the mountain by a series of zigzags. Another very superb view of Palermo is obtained from this causeway, in which the harbour, the Marina, and the distant coast towards Bagaria, with the singular mountains that enclose the bay, form certainly a most enchanting picture, of which we have endeavoured to convey some faint idea in the engraving, p. 151.

About half-way back from Santa Maria di Gesu to the city,

a little to the left of the road, and distinguishable by the surrounding cluster of cypresses, is the church and monastery of Santo Spirito, one of the earliest Christian foundations at Palermo, begun by Archbishop Walter in 1173, and famous as the scene of the memorable Sicilian Vespers. Little however remains of the original edifice, except the east end, which exhibits pointed windows and interlacing arches. To this edifice is now attached the Campo Santo, or cemetery, which we turned out of the road to examine. On passing the gates, we entered an avenue of gloomy cypresses, on each side of which were ranges of large pits covered over with stone slabs, one for each day in the year, into which at nightfall the bodies of the vulgar dead are promiscuously thrown, amidst a horrid confusion from which the imagination revolts, then covered with quick lime, sealed up, and left to fester and decay until the same day of the next year comes round, when a fresh burden of the dead are flung in upon the mouldering relics of their predecessors. Through this dreary approach we reached the convent itself, and the guide, throwing open a pair of gates, pointed out two vaulted galleries, the sight of which, thus unexpectedly disclosed, struck upon the senses with a sudden shock, and haunted the memory for a long time afterwards. The skeletons of the dead, belonging to a certain brotherhood, were here exposed in coffins and cases, clothed by the care of their friends in the very vestments which they had assumed when covered with flesh and blood,—a spectacle which would have been grotesque had it not been unspeakably ghastly. On one side might be seen the bones of a soldier invested in all his regimental finery, and on the other a female with her hands clothed in *white kid gloves*, her skull grinning horribly from the midst of ribbons and laces, and, but for the chapless jaws, reminding one of the expostulation of the fine lady in Pope:—

> "One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead;
> And, Betty, give this cheek a little red."

This morbid fancy of keeping in sight the mortal remains of those dear to them, instead of consigning them at once to their everlasting resting-place, seems one of the characteristics of the southern mind. At the Capuchin convent, on the other side of the city, the defunct brethren are thus similarly preserved in their monkish habiliments. To stimulate the surviving friends to come down handsomely for masses in behalf of the departed, a representation of purgatory is generally annexed, in which they are seen liquefying in the midst of flames, and holding up their hands to the Virgin, to obtain her all-powerful intercession.

The origin of Palermo is lost in the night of antiquity. Thucydides says it was originally inhabited by the Phœnicians, and then passed successively under the Greeks, and especially Carthaginians, becoming, according to Polybius, "the principal city of their dominions in Sicily." Eventually it fell, like the rest of the island, under the sway of the Romans, and during the decline of the empire was overrun by the barbarians and Goths, until, by the valour of Belisarius, it was restored awhile to the Byzantine emperors.

Of this long and troubled period there remain neither records nor memorials of any importance. The monumental interest of Palermo commences with its occupation by the Saracens, who, having conquered Sicily, were so delighted with the situation of this city, and the fruitfulness of its environs, that they made it the principal seat of their power, and introduced here the same arts and sciences which they brought to such high perfection in Spain. Of their architectural magnificence there are several most interesting relics at Palermo,—portions of the sumptuous palaces of emirs and nobles, the principal being called La Cuba and La Ziza. A glowing description is given by Fazellus of the former state of the first-mentioned palace. It stood in an enclosure two miles in circumference, adorned with runnels of water, luxurious

gardens, studded with vaulted pavilions, and in the centre stood the palace itself, overhanging an immense fish-pond. All this splendour has now disappeared, except one of the aforesaid "vaulted pavilions." This is a small and graceful edifice, consisting of four pointed arches, displaying the peculiar ornament which the Normans or their Saracenic workmen, afterwards

copied into the Martorana and other Christian edifices. It is surmounted by a graceful dome, in precisely the same style as those seen in Egypt and other Mahomedan countries.

A more complete and characteristic relic is La Ziza, about half a mile from the city. The exterior of this edifice, like the Alhambra and other Moorish palaces, is plain, the splendour being reserved for the interior. The massive walls are merely relieved with pointed panels, and a Cuphic inscription runs round the summit. A road running along one side of the building, which was formerly enclosed within an extensive garden, passes a beautiful open hall, of precisely the same architecture as the Alhambra, to which has been added a double arch and Corinthian pillars at some later period. Of this building also we have a description, extracted by Mr. Gally Knight from the

LA ZIZA

Palermo

travels of Leandro Alberti in 1526. "At a short distance in front of the principal entrance appears a large square fish-pond, *which is fed by the waters of the fountain in the hall.* The sides of the fish-pond are faced with stone, and each side is fifty feet in length. In the midst of the pond is a square pavilion, approached by a little bridge of stone. Within the pavilion is a vaulted room, with a window on each side; above which is another room, eight feet by twelve. In the upper room are three large windows, of which the front looks upon the palace. Each of these windows is divided by a slender pillar of the finest marble. The ceiling is vaulted, and ornamented in the Moresque style. The floor is inlaid with a variety of marbles, but at present is in bad condition. In this upper room the ladies of the palace used to assemble, and amuse themselves by looking from the windows at the fish swimming in the clear waters below. Their damsels remained in the room beneath, and from its windows enjoyed the same recreation." When to this we add the "beautiful garden filled with orange and lemon-trees, and exotic shrubs," some idea may be formed of this luxurious retreat. It is unnecessary to point out to those familiar with Arabian architecture the peculiar character of the honeycomb tracery, the inlaid marbles, the paved floor, and the fountain gushing forth and pouring down step-work, forming a miniature cascade, and then bubbling along its marble channel, to pour itself into the great fish-pond, which is now filled up. Another Saracenic palace, called Mar Dolce, "the sweet water lake," became a favourite retreat of the Norman monarchs.

When these adventurers conquered the country they were so delighted, like the Saracens, with the situation of Palermo, that they made it their chief residence, and advanced it to the dignity of capital of their newly-founded kingdom. When Count Roger, by the unanimous vote of his barons, assumed the dignity of king, Palermo was the city chosen for his coronation, which took place on Christmas-day, 1130. The newly elected monarch

speedily assumed all the splendour of royalty, and his court displayed the utmost refinement of the period. At his accession he found two classes of the population predominating over the rest, —the Greeks and Saracens,—whose relative position was now reversed. The former, who under the Saracenic rule had been allowed to exercise their religion upon payment of a tribute, were now restored to their original rank, and the arts, manners, and splendid ceremonial of the court of Constantinople, became models for that of Sicily. But with wise and liberal policy King Roger, far from oppressing the Saracens, treated them with so much consideration, that they speedily became attached to his person. He patronised their learned men; and, delighted with the style of their architecture and gardening, called in their assistance in the adornment of his new capital.

Amidst the weighty and important duties of legislating for his new kingdom, and waging war with the Byzantine emperor, and with the African Saracens, Roger was constantly busied in the erection of palaces and churches. He added a wing to the Ziza, and adopted it as an occasional residence. On the site of the residence of the Saracenic lords he built the Palazzo Reale, a ponderous Norman pile, of which a considerable portion still remains. In carrying out his architectural designs, he was induced both by the absence of Norman architects, and probably also by taste, to adopt the services of both the Greek and Saracenic artists, and to combine their peculiarities of style in the decoration of a building of Latin form and outline, introducing at the same time certain peculiarities of Norman architecture to which he had by habit become accustomed. His new subjects seem to have worked with emulation to realize his plans, and both in the capital and other parts of the island have left behind them some of the most singular monuments in Christendom. It may be here observed that the dialect as well as the architecture of Sicily is modified by the intermixture of Greek, Arabic, Norman, and Spanish words.

Perhaps the earliest and simplest of these edifices is the small church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, erected in 1132, and so called from a company of Apulian hermits, invited by the King to inhabit the monastery attached to it. In looking at its group of cupolas one might suppose it to be a Saracenic mosque, but for the form of the Latin cross and round apses which characterize its Christian purpose, and the incontestible evidence contained in a diploma of its founder. The interior, however, is equally Saracenic in detail, as appears from the style of the dome, the peculiar corbels, and other details, all of which may be traced in the mosques and tombs of Cairo.

But the most splendid specimen of the above-mentioned combinations of style is undoubtedly the Capella Reale, the small chapel erected by King Roger in the royal palace, and finished in the year 1132. On ascending the staircase which surrounds the open court up to the third story, we reach the singular façade of the chapel,—if we may so designate the open corridor supported on light pillars, which runs along the side of the building, —covered, like the interior, with quaint and elaborate pictures in mosaic. On one side of the entrance door is a tablet in Latin, Greek, and Arabic, descriptive of a curious clock which was

placed there by the founder of the building, but which is no longer in existence. The Latin inscription is as follows:—

> "Hoc opus horologii præcepit fieri,
> Dominus magnificus Rex Rogerius,
> Anno Incarnationis Domini 1142,
> Anno, vero, regni ejus 13 feliciter."

Entering the bronze portals we find ourselves within an edifice which, from the singularity of its architecture and the poetic effect which reigns within, is singularly fascinating. It is of very small dimensions, consisting of a nave and aisles, at the extremity of which are three semicircular apses, with a dome from which the principal light is admitted. It is difficult, even with the aid of an engraving, to convey any adequate idea of its peculiar style. Referring, however, to our representation, we may first observe that the columns are for the most part antique, the capitals in a composite style from a Grecian chisel, while the arches reposing on them are of Saracenic character, as is also the richly fretted roof, which strikingly resembles that of the Hall of Justice in the Alhambra. Even the form of the dome, and the arches and pillars on which it reposes, seem at least as much Saracenic as Byzantine, as are also the marble panels with which the aisles are lined. The small windows are also of the same character, and admit merely that "dim religious light" so suitable to a place of worship. Nearly the whole of the walls and dome are covered with a gold ground, upon which are wrought a series of mosaic pictures representing scriptural incidents, at the same time quaint and gorgeous. Indeed, to see this building when the priests, in their rich dresses, are engaged in chanting the service, and the sunlight streams through the narrow windows of the dome upon the clouds of incense which ascend curling almost to its summit, and touches some portion of the gilt and storied walls, producing effects that a Rembrandt alone could imitate, is what would of itself reconcile an amateur of art to a long and weary pilgrimage.

After he has revelled in the first effect of the chapel, and marked the mingling of different styles, the mosaics, which are all the work of Greek and probably Byzantine artists, will next attract his attention. They are in a quaint and rigid manner, not unfrequently, however, attaining considerable beauty of form and expression. The taste of their selection is no less curious,—Adam and Eve in Paradise—God breathing into Adam the breath of life—The Creation, with the sun and moon—Eve issuing out of Adam's ribs—Noah and his ark, and the children of the drunken patriarch covering their father's nakedness—the tower of Babel, and other Bible incidents. The best, however, are from the New Testament, and here the artist has delighted to exhibit St. Paul and St. Peter in different circumstances of their lives. The personal appearance of the two apostles is well discriminated, Paul being depicted as tall and thin, with a lofty forehead and bald crown, while Peter is represented with bushy white hair and beard. Here in one compartment the Apostle of the Gentiles is seen falling headlong, and the expression of sudden blindness and groping is very well imagined. In another he appears when let down in the basket from the walls of Damascus. In a third division the two Apostles are disputing with Simon Magus in the presence of Nero, where, no doubt contrary to the artist's intention, they seem fairly gravelled by the arguments of the profane magician. Upon the interior of the dome angels with expanded wings are seen floating in an atmosphere of gold. The artists seem to have lavished their principal talents on the mosaics on the three apses,—that in the centre being a colossal head of Christ, the others, St. Peter and St. Paul. Their execution of these is very superior to the remainder; and they have laboured not unsuccessfully to represent the face of the Madonna as the type of serious and graceful beauty.

A staircase beneath the gallery appropriated to the musicians leads down to another small chapel, which is worthy of no

special remark. Adjoining the chapel is the sacristy, containing a curious collection of deeds and charters relating to the chapel. Some are in Greek, others in Greek and Arabic, and after the time of the Emperor Frederick II. in Latin. The act of foundation is written in gold on purple silk, after the manner of the Byzantine emperors; "a proof," as Mr. Knight observes, "of the attentive manner in which the Byzantine usages were imitated by the Norman kings of Sicily."

We examined the remainder of the palace, which was seriously injured during the last revolutionary conflict, and was then in a course of restoration. There is, however, but one of the Norman apartments remaining in its original state, but it bears ample testimony to the former splendour of the building. It is a room of moderate size, the ceiling coved, and the walls inlaid like those of the chapel-royal with mosaics, but representing different wild beasts, and hunting scenes, recalling the favourite pursuits of the Normans. The rest of the palace, which is occupied as the residence of the Viceroy, is in the modern style, and though splendid enough in its way, unworthy of any particular attention.

Another church of the same period is that called La Martorana, in reality founded by George Antiochenus, High Admiral to King Roger, and first noble of Sicily. This church is of very small dimensions, and in form of the Greek and not the Latin cross, such being the religion of the founder. Like the Capella Reale it is adorned with mosaics, two of which are worthy of especial notice. One of them represents King Roger arrayed in the Byzantine costume, crowned by a colossal figure of the Saviour. There is probably an attempt to pourtray the countenance of the king, the eyes being light and piercing, the nose distinctively aquiline. On the opposite side is the admiral himself, at the feet of the Virgin, holding in her hand a scroll, at the bottom of which is inscribed in Greek characters, "The Prayer of George the Admiral." This church was afterwards

[illegible]

A. MARTORANA.

added to a neighbouring convent, and its dimensions enlarged, thus attaching it to an ancient tower, which, as Mr. Knight supposes, formed the entrance to a different building. It is one of the most curious structures in Palermo. Though the arches below are pointed, yet the second story retains the billet moulding first observed in the little pavilion of La Cuba.

The eminent personage who erected this court also built a bridge over a small stream east of the city, but now dry. This still retains the name of the Ponte dell Ammiraglio, or the Admiral's bridge. It is a solid and substantial edifice of high pitch and with pointed arches of Saracenic form.

The cathedral of Palermo was founded by Walter Ofamilio, the Englishman, in the reign of William the Good, on the site of a more ancient edifice, which, after having been converted into a mosque by the Saracens, was pulled down to make room for another more extensive. Its exterior presents a variety of styles and dates, of which there is but a small part of the original foundation, except part of the south and east end. The west end with its towers and arches was constructed between 1300 and 1355, except the west doorway, which was added in 1426. The most striking and picturesque feature of the exterior—namely, a spacious southern porch (conspicuous in the engraving), was added to the building in 1450. The effect is perhaps rather rich than chaste, as is that indeed of the entire building, and the ornament, which is very elaborate, is a curious mixture of the Grecian and Gothic styles. The dome is a modern and incongruous excrescence, the work of a Neapolitan architect.

The interior of the church has been entirely modernised, and contains but little worthy of notice, except some graceful sculpture of Gagini, the chapel containing the sarcophagi in which repose the ashes of the Norman kings, and the crypt, a portion of the original building. The chapel contains four canopied monuments of precisely similar design, with the

difference that two of the tombs reposing under them are of plain porphyry, and two others of white marble, inlaid with mosaics. On the eastern side of the chapel repose King Roger I. and the Emperor Frederick II.; on the western, Constantia, daughter of the first-named king, and her husband Henry VI.; while in an ancient Greek sarcophagus are the ashes of Constantia, wife of Frederick II. In the annexed representation, the porphyry tomb of the potent founder of

the Norman monarchy appears supported upon the shoulders of kneeling Saracens, and the tablet below bears the following inscription:—

Quieti et Pace
Rogerii strenui Ducis, et primi Regis Siciliæ.
Mortuus est Panormi Februario mense
Anno MCLIV.

These monuments, as Mr. Knight informs us, originally stood

[illegible] reposing under [illegible] white marble. [illegible] side of the chapel repose [illegible] Roger [illegible] Frederick [illegible] western, [illegible] Green [illegible] wife of Frederick II. [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] below [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] Mr. [illegible] forms us, [illegible]

THE CATHEDRAL.

CRYPT OF THE CATHEDRAL.

in the cathedral of Cefalu, founded by King Roger, and where he had originally intended to be interred, but as he had been buried in Palermo, the Emperor Frederick caused the two vacant sarcophagi to be removed hither to receive his father's ashes and his own. They have been repeatedly opened.

The crypt beneath the east end of the church is characterized by stumpy pillars and intersecting Gothic arches, without any admixture of Saracenic style. It contains twenty-four tombs, the most conspicuous among which is that of Frederick of Antiochia, one of the noble companions of King Roger, who is represented in his armour, the size of life, with the sarcophagus of the founder, Walter de Ofamilio, and several of Greek character appropriated to different Archbishops of the See.

From this period the pointed arch came more into vogue, until a further transition of style took place. Of this we have a curious specimen in the Monasterio della Pieta, originally a private palace built in 1495, as appears by the following inscription, the original being in Latin:—

> The king is my witness of the battles which I have waged against the French and Spaniards under the Sicilian king, who has bestowed titles on my fidelity, honours on my valour, and wealth to reward my well-deserving military service: I now erect splendid palaces instead of camps, that I may here enjoy the riches acquired by my blood.

The male line failing, this palace with estates was bequeathed by the last of the family to found a religious institution. The square-headed portal is exceedingly curious. See engraving, p. 172.

At the present day this building is a nunnery, as would appear alone from the grating with which the windows are covered. In perambulating the city, one is everywhere struck with the long heavy galleries in the upper story of the houses, giving painful evidence of the number of these institutions at Palermo, as in

other parts of the island. The monastic system was first introduced into Sicily by Gregory the Great, and was almost destroyed by the Saracens; but King Roger the Norman not only reestablished it, but with his family and successors founded a great number of monasteries and convents, and endowed them with extensive landed property. The number of these institutions, no longer suited to the spirit of the age, is disproportionably great in Sicily; but they are found to be convenient receptacles for the numerous younger branches of noble families, both male and female, who, destitute alike of fortune or occupation, here pass a life of enforced celibacy, rusting away their faculties in these monotonous and gloomy abodes.

These convents, as before observed, confer quite a peculiar physiognomy on the streets of Palermo. The white and pale faces of the nuns are seen as you pass along, peering down, often with no incurious eye, and, it is to be feared, too often with a longing

THE CONVENT GATE

heart, upon the forbidden world beneath them. The "Parlatorio" of the building usually displays an amusing scene. This is a large entry, having a certain number of orifices grated over, at which the inmates of the convent converse with their relations and friends. It is also the rendezvous of a number of poor dependants upon the bounty of the establishment, hanging about with an air of real or affected devotion. Take for example the poor old invalid in the last stage of decrepitude following out with trembling finger the knotty propositions contained in some pious treatise.

This may not be an unsuitable place to say a few words as to the state of the clergy and of religion. Some of the higher dignitaries, it is said, adorn their profession; but the great body of the ecclesiastics enjoy but an indifferent reputation. Smythe, who had numerous opportunities of arriving at the truth, observes, that "the celibacy to which the clergy both regular and irregular are condemned, must occasion sad inroads on integrity, morals, and decorum; especially as from being dispensers of the sacred wafer, they are beyond the pale of secular jurisdiction, and cannot in general be supposed to restrain the natural results arising from want of employment, when assisted by free access afforded them under the cloak of religion to women of not the most rigid virtue. It has even been remarked by some of their jocular wits, as well as by the chaplains of one of the Dukes of Norfolk, that prohibiting priests from having wives is not prohibiting wives from having priests." The monks have no better reputation than the regular clergy; and if both are instrumental in maintaining the fanaticism of the vulgar, as extremes usually meet, the upper classes, while outwardly conforming to the ceremonies of the Church, are said in general to be secretly unbelievers in its doctrines.

The further we go south in Catholic countries, particularly in Naples and Sicily, the more striking is the prevalence of what

is termed by Protestants *Mariolatry*, or the substitution of the Madonna as the chief object of religious worship, instead of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. If we enter the churches, the choicest shrines are occupied by statues of the Virgin, crowned and sceptred as the Queen of Heaven; if we perambulate the streets, every corner exhibits the same tutelary image; while, as already seen, on the walls of cemeteries are representations of souls in purgatory looking up imploringly to her to save them by her all-powerful intercession. Jesus, in short, seems dethroned from His peculiar office as Mediator between God and man, and Mary everywhere substituted in His room. To her the devout Catholics confide their wants and prefer their petitions, as relying more on her sympathy with their distresses, and, peradventure, also indulgence for their frailties.

This state of things has been generally supposed by Protestants to be a mere popular abuse, for which the priests were not responsible; but the startling conversations of Mr. Seymour with the Roman Jesuits have disclosed the fact that it is not merely winked at, but positively encouraged by them. And they defend it upon the ground that the Italians apprehend religion, as they do everything else, rather through the medium of the senses than with the exercise of the reason, and must be dealt with and influenced accordingly. To them there is something austere and distant about the person of the Saviour: they cannot approach him with the same familiarity, or look for the same degree of indulgence at his hands as in the case of a weak though glorified woman. The same tendency of mind renders it needful to present Christianity to them in a passionate and sensuous shape. Without splendid processions, gorgeous ceremonial, melting music, intoxicating incense, statues, pictures, marvels, relics, and all the machinery of the Roman Catholic system,—their religion, such as it is, would speedily decay, and run the risk of perishing utterly, for want of the sensuo-poetical nutriment so congenial to a southern mind.

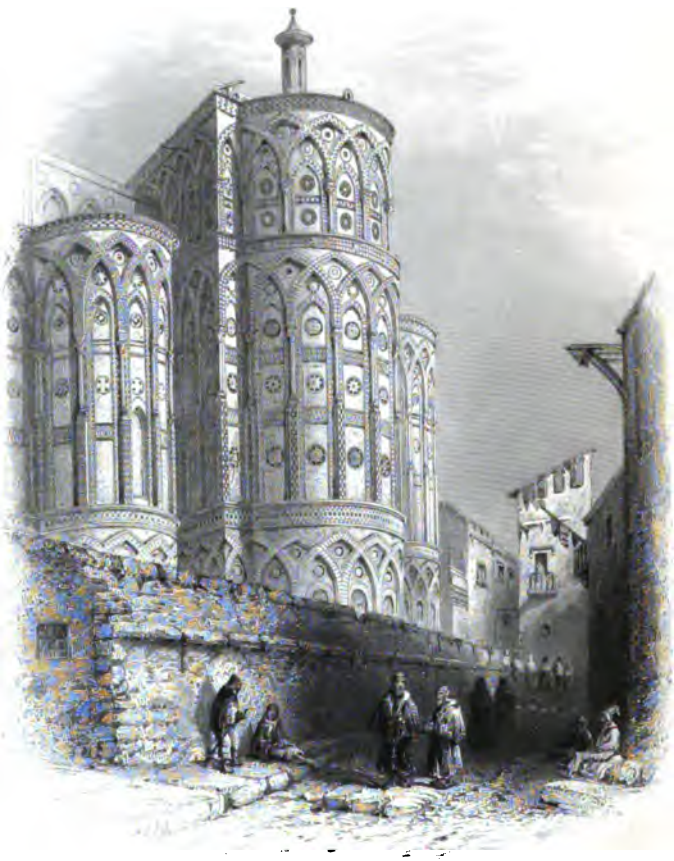
Besides this disproportion of religious establishments, and of the regular clergy in Sicily, there is another important peculiarity of its society—the monstrous number of noblemen,—only the elder branches being adequately provided for, while the younger, forbidden to marry, and too proud to devote themselves to trade, encumber all the walks of society, and are often found to be lamentably degraded both in position and character. Another is the extraordinary proportion of lawyers; there being, according to Smythe, no less than 4,000 advocates, solicitors, notaries, clerks, &c. in a city containing 200,000 souls. These, however, form the basis of a middle class, which is gradually growing up with the increase of trade, and with the more equal distribution of the land effected since the downfal of feudalism; and in the growth of such a class we must look for a main element of the future regeneration of the country.

Having diligently examined the principal objects of interest in the city, early one morning I obtained a donkey, the best *monture* for the rugged paths of the mountains, and, with his driver, started on a visit to the convent of San Martino and the cathedral of Monreale. The road lay across the rich plain of Palermo, as far as the wild village of Bocca di Falco, the entrance of the gorge which gives access to the mountains among which the convent is buried. On the left of the road is a royal villa, very picturesquely situated. Striking into a narrow rugged glen, we continued to ascend gradually until we obtained a lovely view of Palermo, the plain, and the sea. At length this faded away; the glen gave place to a cultivated valley, still overhung with lofty mountains, till, in about half an hour more, the vast façade of the convent of San Martino rose suddenly amidst the solitude like some creation of romance. What added to its effect was the total absence of surrounding habitations, and almost of human life. On reaching the lodge-gates, we found them ruinous and deserted, the courtyard neglected and dirty, while not a human being came forth to reconnoitre or welcome us. Never-

its vast and echoing corridors, strongly reminding one of the "Castle of Indolence" of the poet. We breathed more freely when without its walls, threading the stony path which leads over the mountains to Monreale. About half a mile distant we paused to take a farewell view of the pile, buried among wild and desolate peaks, but surrounded with groves of pine and almond-trees. At a turn of the road it suddenly vanished from our sight like some gorgeous dream.

Perched upon the summit of a lofty mountain over-hanging the valley, is an old grey building, now deserted, called the Castle of St. Benedetto, generally considered to be an ancient Saracenic fortress, converted into a monastery by William the Good. Shortly after passing this we reached the top of this wild pass, and one of the most striking views in Sicily was suddenly disclosed. The plain of Palermo, surrounded by lofty mountains, and open on one side to the Mediterranean, appeared below like a vast garden densely planted with orange and olive groves, and interspersed with corn-fields and vine-yards, terminated by the capital, with its white buildings and domes, and the blue sea beyond. On a spur of the mountain we were descending, and communicating with Palermo by a road four miles in length, stood the town and cathedral of Monreale, to which, dismounting, we descended on foot by a very rugged pathway. As we entered the town we could not but remark that filth and misery seemed entrenched around this magnificent foundation of the Norman King.

As to its origin, the popular legend, but it must be confessed a very doubtful one, is as follows:—The spot was formerly covered with a wild forest, whither William II. repaired from Palermo to indulge in the favourite amusement of hunting. Overtaken by slumber after his fatigues, the Virgin Mary appeared to him in a vision, and desired him to erect a church in her honour on the very spot. The pious monarch determined to outdo all his former efforts, and an edifice soon arose, which, though different



MONREALE.

E. Bn.

in style, might vie in extent and splendour with any of the cathedrals erected by the Norman Kings in England or in France. The most celebrated artists, Greek, Italian, and Saracenic, were employed in its construction and adornment, and it remains the most splendid monument of that singular and often gorgeous, though some may think incongruous, combination of styles already referred to in the Chapel Royal at Palermo. To the cathedral was attached a monastery, a town speedily grew up around it, and the place, in honour of its founder, received the name of Monreale, or the Royal Mount.

Externally, it must be admitted, this cathedral is but little imposing. Here are none of the lofty towers, decorated windows, and ponderous buttresses of the north. The sides of the edifice are plain, and but poorly relieved by a few small lights. The dome is insignificant; there is indeed a tower, which is plain and devoid of style; but the east end, (of which an engraving is annexed,) presents a very remarkable specimen of the tall and slender pillars, interlacing arches, and elaborate mosaics peculiar to this style of architecture. Great richness and piquancy are produced by the style of ornamentation, the arches being formed of alternate blocks of black and white stones, and the panels diversified with various devices and colours. The general effect of this style of architecture is very graceful, especially when seen under the brilliant light of a southern sun.

No other portion of the exterior exhibits the same style; the west front is uninteresting, if we except the great portal, which is exceedingly elaborate, displaying the same combination of Grecian scroll-work and mosaic, curiously intermingled with the Norman zigzag moulding. It encloses a magnificent bronze door, adorned with scripture subjects and arabesques, equal in dimensions, and of similar style with those that adorn the cathedrals of Florence and Pisa. From an inscription at the bottom, it appears to be the work of Bonanus, a celebrated artist of the last mentioned city, and cast in the year 1186.

When the immense bronze doors are suddenly thrown open, the effect of the interior covered with gold and mosaic, and sunk in a rich half-shadow, is indescribably gorgeous. The nave, ample and spacious, resembles a basilica, rather than the vaulted edifice of the north. The design is exceedingly simple; a range of massive pillars of different coloured marbles, taken from ancient Roman buildings, and surmounted by capitals, some of them antique, and others rich in device and execution, evidently carved by Greek workmen. The arches above are slightly pointed; a range of slender lights above them casts a subdued light into the edifice, which is surmounted by a rich flat roof, gorgeously carved and decorated. There is a single aisle running behind the nave, and the east end consists of three apses, that in the centre being of course the largest.

As before observed, the architecture exhibits several styles most curiously blended together. The form of the building is a Latin cross, dictated no doubt by the founder; but, except the pointed arches which are utterly unlike those of our cathedrals, nothing of what we call Gothic architecture is here to be seen. The pillars are Roman, the capitals from a Greek chisel, and the mosaics by artists of the Byzantine school, probably engaged for the express purpose. These mosaics, with which the greater part of the interior is covered, confer upon it a distinctive character. They are wrought upon a gold ground, in the same peculiar style as those in the Chapel Royal, and exhibit a series of scripture incidents. Predominating the whole is a colossal head of the Saviour in the centre apse, which produces, as it was intended to do, an awful and striking effect. But this is not all; the marble panelling of the side aisles, the ornamental devices, and the decorations of the roofing, are all strikingly Saracenic, while Norman peculiarities of detail are curiously intermingled with the rest. Combining as it does so many styles nowhere else seen in juxtaposition, and wrought into one grand whole by the master-mind of the architect, the cathedral

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MONREALE.

Interior

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of Monreale is undoubtedly the most curious, as well as magnificent monument of the period which gave it birth.

From the cathedral it is but a step across the square to the monastery. Here, before entering the cloister, we paused a moment on the staircase to examine a splendid painting by Monrealese, probably the *chef d'œuvre* of this artist. It represents St. Martin distributing bread. Some of the heads are admirably beautiful, and the picture deserves the closest attention from the connoisseur.

From the entrance of the convent a passage leads into the extensive cloister, which adjoins the south side of the cathedral. Here is another beautiful and characteristic specimen of the mixed architecture of the time of the Norman Kings, the cloister as well as the edifice being the work of William II. It is surrounded by an immense number of single or coupled pillars, the angles having four, surmounted by small pointed arches of peculiar form. All are elaborately ornamented, and display a fertility of design and delicacy of execution truly extraordinary, no two resembling each other. Some of the capitals are full of grotesque figures and heads; in others, to suit the Norman taste, knights engaged in battle are interwoven among the ornaments, while others present the most beautiful combinations of fruit, flowers, and animals. The slender columns are sometimes wreathed with foliage, sometimes inlaid with brilliant mosaic. At one angle of the cloister (see engraving—next page), is a square recess, containing a marble fountain with an ornamental pillar, adorned in the Saracenic style. Though the detail is not Saracenic, yet the relative proportion of the shafts and capitals, and the general effect of the work, strikingly recal the Alhambra, except that the covered roofing is very plain. This cloister is sadly neglected, the mosaics falling out of the columns, and the whole place having a dirty and degraded look.

Our view well exhibits both the character of the single, double, and quadruple pillars, and so far as possible on this

small scale, the general style of ornamentation. The Norman tower with its slender lancets, plain and massive in character, appears at the extremity of the cloister, above which is seen the body of the church. On the other side of the cloister are the ruinous walls of the refectory.

There is no sort of inn in Monreale, and our noonday repast consisted of a stupendous bunch of grapes, purchased for one halfpenny from a neighbouring fruit stall, and bearing as undeniable testimony to the richness of the surrounding soil, as every object around did to the squalid misery of the population. This, however, to an English eye, is no doubt often more apparent than real. Beneath a genial climate and a cloudless sky but little suffices for mere bodily support; and the natives, totaly destitute—from the highest to the lowest—of a sense of all that we call comfort, vegetate contentedly in a state of nastiness from one generation to another.

Having seen the cathedral there was nothing to detain us in Monreale, and we began to descend the hill towards Palermo. What a scene of luxurious beauty expands below! Aloes, their stems twenty feet high, shoot up with astonishing vigour from among the lumps of rock; the prickly pear extends its impenetrable thickets; immense orange groves, dense and velvety, extending for more than a mile in one unbroken mass, completely cover the bed of the valley. Here and there a white house peeps up among the thick foliage; and lofty mountains, rugged and brown, and of abrupt formation, shelter that intoxicating luxury of verdure peculiar to the most favoured spots in the south. Through this the road, adorned with fountains and vases, descends by rapid traverses towards Palermo, which basks in sunshine upon the margin of the Mediterranean. What is wanting to such a scene as this? To a southern eye probably nothing: to an English the want of meadows and pastures, and that rustic neatness that spreads such a charm over the face of a country, even when devoid of any striking

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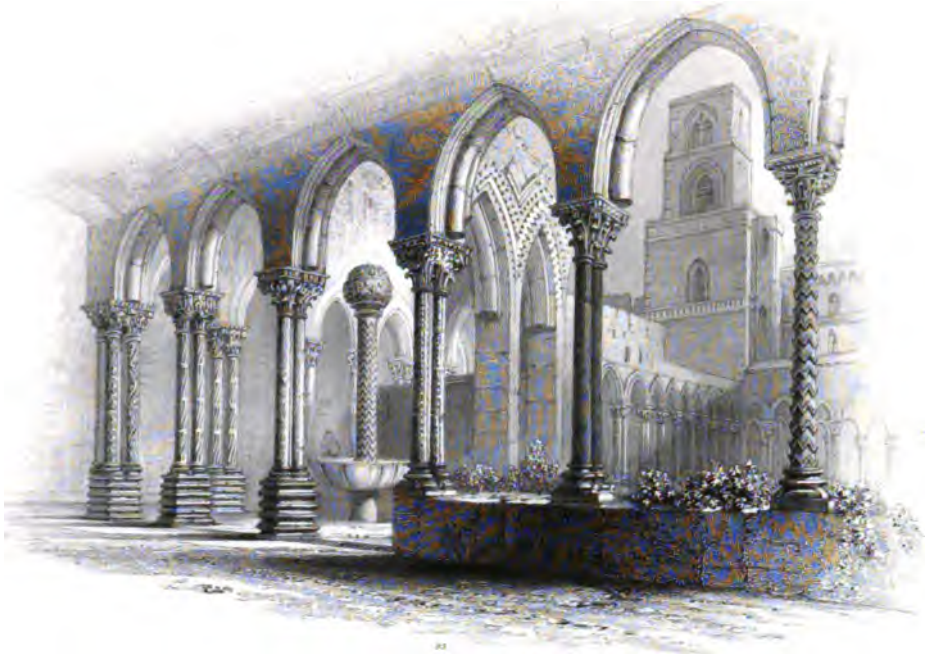

THE CLOISTER.

natural features. Yet the plain of Palermo may challenge comparison for richness and beauty with any similar scene on the Mediterranean; and, in gazing upon it, we cannot wonder that by Saracen and Norman alike it was regarded as an earthly Paradise, and adorned by them with the utmost refinement of horticultural and architectural splendour.

We have here described only the principal buildings in Palermo. To the architectural student there are many others worthy of attentive observation, as showing the transition of style,—such as San Francesco di Assisi, built in 1255; San Agostin, at the close of the thirteenth century; San Giacomo la Marina, 1339; Santa Maria Annunziata, 1343; San Nicholo di Albergario, 1400; Santa Maria dello Spasimo, 1506; Santa Maria della Catena, and others. In domestic architecture, the Palazzo dei Tribunali, begun in 1307, the Ospedale Grande, and the Vecchio Dogana, are all of them curious and interesting specimens.

After dwelling so long upon the churches and buildings of Palermo, it may perhaps be a relief to the reader to go forth into the environs. We have already described Monreale, San Martino, Monte Pellegrino, and Santa Maria di Gesu. Let us now devote a page or two to the villas with which the Palermitan noblemen have studded the neighbourhood of their capital. These, it must be confessed, are not much after our own fashion, —displaying rather the eccentricity than good taste of their contrivers. Not having paid much attention to these myself, I am indebted to others for the following descriptions. Bagaria, about nine miles from Palermo, on the coast road to Messina, is quite made up of villas. "Here," Mrs. Starke tells us, "is a *whimsical villa*, built by Prince Palagonia, who squandered a large estate in having all the most hideous combinations of beings, real and imaginary, represented by the best sculptors he could engage to work for him; and a few scattered monsters, on the approach to

the villa, together with a semicircular court, still remaining, show how successfully he gratified his eccentric taste." Looking-glass ceilings, and walls covered with painted imitations of marble, rendered more deceptive by a covering of glass, are still further proofs of the bad taste of the proprietor. But the best description of these curious places is from the lively pen of an American writer.

"We had a *valet-de-place*, who directed our movements first to the suburb called Olivuzza, a quarter of ancient and noble villas, of which we visited two,—those of the Prince of Radili, and the Duca di Serra-di-falco—with extended and delicious gardens, parks imitated from England, but with all the different foliage of the Sicilian climate. Superb magnolia grandifloras, long alleys of oleander, groves of lemon and orange, big as apple-trees; labyrinths of jessamine and aloe, and every prodigality of shrub and tree, and garden contrivances; fountains, temples, statues, quaint imitation ruins of aqueduct and abbey, moss-grown, Tintern-like, and picturesque; aviaries, making the lawns vocal, and a' that; little lakes with little sleeping Moseses, pedestaled in bullrushes: all which, as usual, made me wish for you.

"One little freak of fancy of some ancestral Serra-di-falco made me wish for the little ones rather, although contrived for the amusement of children of a larger growth. The guide conducted us aside from the principal avenues, and we entered a narrow walk through thickly-tangled shrubs of every description, made to look like a wilderness gone to seed, with tall cypresses and yews to give it a dash of gloomy. Presently the path grew winding and rugged; we descended miniature cliffs, and walked through dells labyrinthine, until at length we pronounced ourselves as lost as the babes in the wood, and we cried like starlings, 'Can't get out.' A few more turns, and a rustic hut, built of logs, weeds, and moss, appeared to offer a little respite. Three rude steps conducted to the door, and the guide motioned

us to walk in. I was a little in advance, and had no sooner put my foot on the first step, than the door flew open, and a venerable hermit, in cowl and sandals, with long grey beard and hollow cheeks, rose indignantly from his table, and angrily motioned us away. I jumped backward ten feet by 'Shrewsbury' cloth-yard, and the door closed with a bang. Once more upon the breach, however, and as I reached the platform the gestures of the monk became furious; his mouth opened wide, and his eyes rolled with rage. The conceit is capital, and at first the appearance of the automaton deceived me altogether. An ancient musty volume of Latin manuscript lay open on the table, and the relics of a few withered roots, on which the holy man appeared to have dined some weeks before, were spread upon a trencher. Certain springs and wires connect with the figure and door from the steps, and an unsuspecting visitor can be startled a good deal. It appears my friends had made researches in guide books, and had some suspicions of the circumstance: I therefore, unlearned in authorities, was cunningly allowed to go forwards, and reach the roasted chestnuts from the fire.

"After some examination of the affair, we walked away, following the guide, and supposing we were on our return; the path became more artificially wild, however, and there was a still

'Browner horror o'er the woods.'

At length we reached another hermitage, A twice-told tale, thought I, and felt quite like a lion. Why in the world, though, did my companions still hang back? More roasted chestnuts, perhaps: so, Mr. Guide, do you come along also. He led me to the extreme end of the step, and bade me mount, which I did. Immediately, as I supposed, the door flew open, but with the accompaniment of five or six little water-spouts, and streams shot about me in every direction, except precisely where the guide had placed me. Within the cell, a hermit also was discovered at a table, but this was a jolly Friar Tuck; and as the water-spouts

were dashing about from the key-hole, the door-sill, the table-legs, and so forth, his mouth opened from ear to ear, and 'Laughter holding both his sides' was graphic in the attitudes and tickled expression of this most holy man. His *pax vobiscums* and *benedicites* were waved to us from the very fountain head of the fun; and his laughing was more infectious than the varioloid in Philadelphia: it would be catching for three months rather than the three weeks prescribed by your neighbours as the proper period for infection. Laughing was performed to the life by everybody; and when I found I had just precisely escaped a ducking, I struck crescendo into the chorus. The whole fun was put in action by the steps, and the trick of the ducking could be deliciously played by allowing the visitor to mount any other portion of the steps than just precisely where we stood. No doubt many a fair Serra-di-falco signorina has thus thrown cold water on her beaux."

The present Duke of Serra-di-falco has honourably distinguished himself by his excellent and costly publications, upon the antiquities of his native island, which deserve to rank among works of permanent value and interest.

In walking round the harbour we are struck with the number of large fishing boats, and with the hardy appearance of the boatmen. The fisheries of Palermo are, indeed, very important, employing, according to Smythe, not less than 4,000 of the population, formed into a regular corporation, having surgeons, a chaplain, and other officers. The principal fish taken is the tunny, which, though it was highly esteemed by the Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans, and is no less so by the modern Palermitans, would prove but little acceptable to an English palate at the present day. Nevertheless, it forms here one of the chief articles of food, and may be seen in the season at every corner of the streets, *butchered* into steaks, being from four to eight feet in length. Of the mode of taking the tunny, an interesting account is given by Smythe. This fish is gregarious, the shoals enter

the Mediterranean early in the year, with an extended base for the tides to act upon, as they swim broad, deep, and in a conical form. In the progress of the shoal to the eastward, it inclines over towards the European coasts, and the tunny is caught in great abundance during the months of May, June, and July. The manner of catching them is similar to that practised by the ancients: large nets are spread out in the shape of a parallelogram, about 1,500 feet long, 300 wide, and from 40 to 100 deep, divided into four quadrilateral spaces, called rooms, having channels of communication with each other. These nets are moved east and west, at about a mile distant from the shore, across the known route of the fish, with each of the spaces at right angles, and secured vertically by a number of anchors and stones at the bottom, while the upper edge of the net is floated by large logs of the cork-tree and other light wood. The whole is then connected with the shore by a stout single net of very wide meshes, called "the wall," or by others "il codardo," that arrests the progress of the tunny, and induces them to enter the outer room, called the "bordonaro," which is thereupon raised a little, and closed by the boatmen on the look out. The fish, alarmed, and seeking to escape, then swim from side to side, and thus enter the next room or "bastardo," when their retreat is again prevented, and thus successively into the "picolo," until they finally enter the fatal part called the "corpo," or chamber of death. When by these means the chamber is filled, which sometimes occupies two or three days, large flat-floored boats, peculiarly constructed for the purpose, assisted by many smaller ones, close round, and weighing the net, secure the prey with harpoons, and another species of sharp hook on a wooden staff, that is struck into the head to prevent the fish from floundering, and in the management of which weapon the fishermen display an active dexterity.

In drawing to a close these brief sketches of the principal objects of interest in and about Palermo, a few words may be

added upon the character of its population. According to their own writers, the Palermitans, and the Sicilians in general, are fond of novelty, hasty in speech, vivid of imagination, and so sensitive as to take fire at the most trifling offence. Affable, friendly, and benevolent, they are no less litigious, obstinate, and suspicious. Foreigners long resident among them complain of a certain insensibility as to the "point of honour." Some of their faults are inherent to a southern constitution; others probably result from bad political institutions, and a defective social condition. They are proud of the ancient glories of their country, and earnestly desirous of working out her political regeneration. Among their virtues, beneficence is very conspicuous; witness the numerous charitable establishments founded by the Palermitan nobility and clergy. The proceedings of the Provisional Government show that they are sensible of the necessity of effecting practical reforms; and that if they were blessed with a better government, they are capable of developing the immense resources of their country, and of gradually ameliorating its social condition. They are a people, in short, whom it is painful to see under the yoke of a degrading despotism, which tends to crush their best qualities, and to call into activity only their worst passions.

The interior of Sicily is but little visited, and, although it may here and there present a few remarkable spots, on the whole will scarcely repay the trouble of exploring, especially as the accommodation is perfectly detestable. It is possible that traces of the Sicali may exist at some of the towns. The scenery in general is bald, dreary, and uninviting. There is a good road across the very centre of the island, from Palermo to Aderno, whence it divides into two branches, leading to Messina and Catania. On one occasion I was induced to take a place in the mail which travels this road, and had reason to repent of the speculation. Although the coach was only adapted for four persons, six were remorselessly crammed inside. There

were, we understood, no inns on the whole line of road, a distance of two hundred English miles. Nothing can give a better index to the state of the country. Fancy not a single decent inn on the road between York and London! We were accordingly obliged to carry cold provisions, and found the greatest difficulty in getting even fresh bread, eggs, and coffee, at the wretched post-houses on the route. By degrees, as the road is more travelled, things will, no doubt, mend; but the steamers take by far the greater number of passengers.

The wildness of the country, the want of roads, and, above all, the disorganization of society arising from a government at once tyrannical and feeble, caused Sicily to be infested with bands of robbers, which have been but very lately extirpated, mainly by the exertions of certain armed companies, who are paid for clearing the road, on condition that they make good all losses. This establishment has worked admirably, though now and then a robbery still occurs. This was the case two or three nights after I left Palermo, as I afterwards learned from a "*commis voyageur*," one of the passengers. "At midnight," he said, "we were crossing a steep mountain, and the postilion asked us to get down and walk. We had advanced a good way before the coach, when we suddenly beheld flashes of fire from the high bank above the road, accompanied by the report of carbines. Upon this we took to our heels, and ran a considerable distance up the road, when we heard the rumbling of wheels, and fancying the robbers had got into the coach in order to pursue us, we plunged among the thickets, and dispersed in different directions. For my own part, I was so terrified that I scrambled in the dark up to the top of a high mountain, where I remained till dawn. I then ventured to descend to a peasant's cottage, and shortly after fell in with the other passengers, half perished with cold and fright. Accompanied by the peasants, we now ventured cautiously to return to the road, where we found the coach and conductor, who had received a severe beating from the

robbers. These men, it seems, had by some means found out that a large sum of money had been sent from a bank at Palermo to Catania, which they succeeded in carrying off. I was afraid that our baggage would have gone after it, in which case I should have been obliged to return to Leghorn for fresh specimens; but what was my relief on seeing my boxes of cottons and calicoes perched safely on the top of the coach!"

Our own adventures on this road were more fortunate. Leaving Palermo at night, we were next morning among the Nebrodian hills, which, celebrated as they were by the ancients, were wild and dreary, without being grand and picturesque. Here and there shot up some isolated, jagged peak of rock. The population is gathered into small towns, for the most part perched on some lofty, inaccessible peak. The appearance of the few peasants we met was rugged and melancholy as the surrounding landscape, and the few little villages that lay on our road seemed perfectly antediluvian. Here and there, as at Valle Lunga, which we reached at noon, we came upon some beautiful valley smiling with vineyards and olives, which relieved the general tameness and dreariness of the route. We made a short halt at Villarosa, a dreary town, full of asses laden with sulphur, this being the most important article of exportation from the island.

The evening fell as we toiled up a steep winding road to the small station of Misericordia. Here is one of the most remarkable scenes in the whole island. From the post-house in the valley below appear two crags of almost inaccessible steepness—that on the left covered with the picturesque old town of Calascibetta, and that on the right, even more abrupt and rugged, with the ancient towers of Castro Giovanni, the ancient Enna, and sacred to the goddess Ceres. The whole of this neighbourhood is full of classic interest, and its beauties are the subject of eulogy by the old writers. Power informs us that "Ovid calls its climate a perpetual spring. Cicero admires its lovely flowers,

flourishing at all seasons of the year. Plutarch exalts its freshness; and Aristotle, Diodorus, Livy, Strabo, and the Greek and Roman writers in general, dwell upon the woods, lakes, and waters, and verdure, which render it so delightful a sojourn, though to modern travellers these eulogies appear somewhat overstrained. Its situation was described as impregnable by Livy; and its lofty platform, rising in the very centre of the island, commands a boundless prospect over its plains, and mountains, and valleys, among which Etna towers up with conspicuous grandeur." The air and climate of this favoured spot are considered to be very fine; and nothing can surpass the richness of the vines which ripen upon its sunny flanks. There are no ruins of any consequence at Castro Giovanni; but four miles distant is the Lake of Pergusa, supposed to be the crater of an extinguished volcano; but the scenery around it is said hardly to repay the trouble of a visit.

Leaving Castro Giovanni, the road passes through Leonforte to Aderno, near the base of Mount Etna, and already described in the tour around it. It was observed in a previous chapter, that Signor Gemellaro prognosticated a fresh eruption of the volcano, which has indeed taken place while these sheets were passing through the press. Of this, in the absence of fuller details, I subjoin the following lively notice, recording the adventures of a company of travellers from Malta, which appeared in the columns of the *Times*:—

"At 8 P.M. of the 20th of August a party of English, composed of Captain and Mrs. Hallett, two Misses Sankey, the Hon. Lieutenant Finch (68th Light Infantry), and Lieutenant Ravenhill (Royal Engineers), with three guides, three muleteers, and a servant, together with eleven mules, left Nicolosi with an intention of ascending Mount Etna, and taking a shelter at the Casa Inglese. At 11 o'clock the party, in excellent spirits, reached the Bosco, where they put on their light clothing. The wind was blowing fresh from the westward; so much so,

indeed, that the guides persuaded a small Italian party to defer their ascent till the morning, but could not succeed with our friends, the leader of whom had weathered too many stiff breezes at sea to turn his back on one on shore: on, therefore, they went.

"Passing the Bosco about two miles, the huge crater below Etna, called the Colossi, glared awfully, and shortly threw up large bodies of fire and smoke. Immediately after, Etna vomited forth its fire and ashes; and as the wind set towards the Casa Inglese, it was not prudent to seek its friendly shelter, as in all probability it would be destroyed; their course was, therefore, changed, the Colossi being now the point to which it was directed.

"The weather, which had been very cold, was increasing in its comfortless intensity; and when our travellers had got above the height of the Casa Inglese, in a narrow defile, of which sand and small lava were the component parts, they were overtaken by a hurricane so violent, that in an instant seven mules and their riders were blown over; and not only so, but to render the scene more terrific, it was afterwards found they were blown to the very edge of the crater.

"For the gentlemen to descend in search of their companions was the result of a moment's decision. At this time the scene was indescribably grand. Heaven and earth presented one magnificent glare of light—Etna above vomiting its sulphuric flames; the Colossi below belching forth its dense masses of smoke, lurid from the furnace below; the huge mountain pouring out from its interior prolonged moanings; without, the hurricane roaring in all its mighty and awful majesty. Crawling on their knees and hands, unable to face the violence of the hurricane, the gentlemen sought the ladies, who were not discovered and collected together till after a search of twenty minutes. They were then placed under columns of lava, their light clothing literally blown off their backs, and a pyramid of

living beings was formed around them for their safety and protection.

"As by magic, the scene suddenly changed. An earthquake shook the land. Up jumped the guides, bawling their unmusical *Avanti! avanti!* (Get on! get on!)—mules broke from their keepers, and were abandoned to their fate; the hurricane increased in strength. The scene around was too majestic for contemplation, too diversified for description. In ten minutes the little party had fallen from sheer exhaustion on the pointed lava. To face the wind charged with sand and small stones was beyond their power. In this manner two hours passed away, and most anxiously did they look for the approach of dawn.

"Within the crater, which some of the party courageously examined, forty small furnaces were burning awfully; these, as they reached Catania, seemed to amalgamate, and one vast issue appeared to carry destruction to some villages and pasture lands, which, as reported, have been seriously injured.

"Often has the indomitable courage of the soft sex, when tested, been proved to be greater than that of man. Nothing on this occasion could equal their more than heroism. On setting forth on their return, the sharp points of the lava presented no obstacle; courageously did they undertake their six-mile walk, regardless of all inconveniences, and reached the Bosco at 7 A.M., when, after an abstinence of sixteen hours, a hasty *déjeûner* was a welcome event. After spending a few minutes in this employment, they continued their journey by mules, and reached Nicolosi by 10, whence they started for Catania, which they reached at 2.30 P.M. The Italian party which had preceded them had reported their obstinacy in proceeding against the opinion of their guides, and this led to the natural report that they were numbered with the dead.

"Their safety, indeed, is miraculous; for had rain ensued, as often happens before an eruption, they would have been washed

away; had the wind changed, they would have died under the sulphur-impregnated air. As it was, the Catanese turned out, and hailed the return of the brave party as of men and women miraculously saved from a fearful doom."

Of the amount of injury caused by this eruption, which has continued for some time, no authentic accounts have as yet reached us; but there can be little doubt that they are very considerable. A gentleman writing from Catania on the 1st inst. says:—

"Zafarana has been, and still is, in considerable danger: by last accounts, the lava was at a very short distance from it, and, apparently, nothing but the interposition of Providence could save it. The soil on the sides of Etna generally is full of undulations—in some places mere hillocks, in other places hills—caused by the lava scoriæ from previous eruptions. The lava, as it flows on in its downward course, is naturally turned aside by these undulations or irregularities, and some hill or obstacle may possibly turn aside the lava ere it reach Zafarana. I may here mention that it is calculated the course of the lava since the eruption first broke out, is, owing to its devious windings, caused by the undulations alluded to above, full sixteen miles, while the distance in a straight line does not exceed three miles. The first stream of lava, after nearly reaching Zafarana, suddenly ceased, as if the eruption was at an end. It is a second stream, flowing on the first, which now causes so much alarm. Great damage has already been done to the vineyards and chestnut woods on the slope of the mountain; and it is to be feared that the damage will still be very considerable, even if Zafarana escape. This village and Ballo, a suburb thereof, have been deserted by the inhabitants, and several houses higher up than it have been already destroyed."

It remains very briefly to notice a few places of interest not visited by the Author. We shall first select those on the

post-road from Palermo to Messina, along the northern coast of the island. A diligence runs between the two places, but its progress is extremely tedious, and the accommodations, as usual, are very bad.

After passing the bay of Palermo, the first place of any note is Termini, called Thermæ Himereme, on account of its hot baths, and proximity to the site of the ancient Imera, whose citizens, flying from the siege, built, as Cicero informs us, this new foundation. Some traces are still to be seen of its baths and amphitheatre, but hardly of interest enough to detain a traveller. Cefalu, the next city on the road, is a place of great interest, and boasts of a Norman cathedral, inferior only to that of Monreale. This building was erected by King Roger, who, on his passage from Salerno to Sicily, having been overtaken in 1131 by a furious storm, vowed to the Saviour that if his life was spared, he would erect a cathedral upon the spot where he first set foot on land, which happened to be at Cefalu. It is believed that he first erected, at his landing-place, a small church dedicated to St. George, and afterwards the present imposing structure, of which Mr. Gally Knight has given the best notice. "It is a building of considerable size, in the shape of the Latin Cross, perfect and intact in all its principal parts. It consists of a nave, side aisles, and transepts, and has three apses at the east end, but no central tower. The choir and transepts are vaulted and groined. The nave has a wooden roof. All the arches are pointed, and, as at Monreale, the apses are adorned with mosaics. The west porch has a semicircular arch, and is remarkably curious. As at Monreale, the outside of the east end is much enriched, and here may be seen a series of small semicircular arches, resting on grotesque heads, as in the churches of Normandy. To sum up, the cathedral of Cefalu is indisputably in the pointed style, with a mixture of Norman, of Roman, of Greek, and of Byzantine in its ornaments and details.

At Cefalu is also a curious Cyclopean wall, with a chamber,

forming part of the old Greek city, which stood above the site of the present town.

Hence there is no place of any importance till we reach Patti, whose chief interest is connected with the Norman period. In its cathedral repose the ashes of Queen Adelasia, mother of the great King Roger, who became the wife of Baldwin, King of Jerusalem; but after two years' residence there, discovering that Baldwin had another wife, returned to Sicily, and taking the veil, buried her grief and mortification in the convent founded here by her brother.

To Patti succeeds Tindaro, a place whose origin ascends to the mythic ages, being so called after Tyndarus, father of Leda, who bore the twin brothers Castor and Pollux. Some trifling remains are found here, and the view from the rock is said to be remarkably grand. In the neighbourhood is also a very curious grotto, well worthy of examination. Off Tindaro took place the famous sea-fight between Octavius Cæsar and Sextus Pompeius. Melazzo is the last place of note before we reach Messina. It was the ancient Mylæ, and in its fields pastured the famous Oxen of the Sun, slain, according to Homer, by the companions of Ulysses. Most of these ancient places have at the present day little besides their classical associations to recommend them. From Melazzo to Messina the road, in crossing the mountains, displays some most magnificent views.

Westward and southward of Palermo, on the left of the road adopted by the author, are Trapani, Marsala, and Mazzara. The first of these towns, the ancient Drepanon, is of most remote origin,—probably settled by the Phœnicians,—and its port, shaped like a scythe, is mentioned by Virgil, whose pious Æneas, on his wandering career, here celebrated funeral games in honour of his father Anchises. At the present day it is well fortified, and enriched by the tunny and coral fishery, but has little to show of either ancient or modern interest. From this place travellers often make the ascent of Monte S. Giuliano,—the

ancient Mount Eryx,—already alluded to in the description of Segeste. This mountain, as before observed, was famed for its temple of Venus Erycina, the most dissolute of the heathen deities, and the favourite haunt of the wealthy devotees of the goddess. Its immense riches remained untouched until seized by Hamilcar, who divided them amongst his soldiers,—to which act of sacrilege was attributed the plague which shortly after broke out in his army. The statue of Venus was among the spoils carried away by the Romans. An ancient city, the walls of which are still in existence, also stood on Mount Eryx, to which has succeeded a modern town. Some faint traces of the famous temple still exist in the castle upon the summit of the mountain, the view from which would alone repay the trouble of an ascent.

Marsala is built upon the site of the ancient Lilybæum, one of the three promontories of Sicily. The Phœnicians, it is believed, first settled here; and the capacious port and its skilful pilots are mentioned by Virgil and Polybius. It was in this harbour that the Carthaginians landed before marching to destroy Selinunte, and it remained long afterwards their principal stronghold in the island, nor could the Romans take it from them until after a ten years' siege. This famous port was at length blocked up, in the sixteenth century, that it might no longer prove a harbour for the Barbary corsairs. The Saracens are said to have destroyed the old city, and built another on the site of the present, which the Normans, on driving them out, surrounded with the existing walls and towers. Marsala is familiar to modern ears by its white wine, which first springing into notice during the presence of Lord Nelson's fleet at Naples, and the English occupation of Sicily, as a palatable substitute for sherry, has since obtained an immense market in England and America; and besides enriching our own merchants, by whom the trade is monopolized, has greatly benefited the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Off the coast between Trapani and Marsala is a group of picturesque islands,—San Pantaleone, Favignano, Maretimo, and Levanzo. On the first, it is believed, stood the ancient Motya, wrested by Dionysius from the Carthaginians, after an obstinate defence, by erecting machinery upon the shoals dividing it from the land, and thus rendering it a sort of peninsula. Favignano, about eighty miles from the coast of Africa, has two harbours, in which the Roman fleet was posted during the first Punic war, to prevent the Carthaginians throwing succours into Trapani while besieged by the Roman soldiers. The other islands are only remarkable for their picturesque formation.

Between Marsala and Selinunte is Mazzara, surrounded by strong walls and towers, of Norman origin, but with no antiquities save three sarcophagi contained in the cathedral.

At Selinunte we fall into the route around the island, which has been already described, and here, accordingly, we take leave of our readers, with many thanks for their patient companionship through these rambling and desultory sketches.

APPENDIX.

THOSE who may desire to visit Sicily, and prefer a sea voyage, can reach Palermo, *viâ* Gibraltar, by the screw steamers of the Anglo-Italian Company, from Liverpool to the Mediterranean. For times of departure, see Bradshaw. Steamers leave Naples for Palermo direct every few days. There are also others which go to Messina, touching on the Calabrian coast. The French steamers from Marseilles to Malta, and *vice versâ*, also touch at Messina.

A special passport is required for Sicily. It can easily be obtained on application to the ambassador at Naples.

Mail stages are now established on most of the principal lines in Sicily, as from Palermo to Catania, through the interior, and Palermo to Messina by the coast, Messina to Catania, Palermo to Trapani, &c. These conveyances, of which a list may be obtained at the post offices, are, however, very badly managed. A party will always do better to hire a private carriage. On the mule roads the traveller must either take a lettiga or ride, and in any case should be careful to make a contract before some respectable innkeeper. He should also carry with him a stock of tea, coffee, and provisions, with one or two cooking utensils; and a party will do well to add a tent and mattrasses, though it is possible the inns may be slightly ameliorated.

To those who do not care to see much of the interior, the steamers which occasionally ply from Messina to Palermo, Trapani, and Girgenti, offer a cheap and easy medium of communication. Inquire at the hotels.

There are but few really good hotels in Sicily. The "Trinacria," at Palermo, merits especial notice, for the beauty of its situation, and the cleanliness and comfort of its interior. The

usual charge is four carlini for breakfast of tea or coffee and a single dish, and eight carlini for the *table d'hôte.* The rooms according to their size and situation,—a comfortable bedroom, with a sea view, costing six carlini. (The carlino is worth 4*d.* English.) At the British Consulate, which is very near, the service of the Church of England is performed every Sunday morning. There are other hotels in Palermo, which are tolerably comfortable and less expensive, but for English travellers making a short stay the above may be safely recommended.

At Messina the "Gran Bretagna" is on the whole the best for English travellers, as its situation is excellent; but it was very dirty and badly managed, at a very recent date. At Catania, Abbate's hotel is still the best, though now very indifferent. "Il Sole," at Syracuse, may be mentioned with great commendation. At Trapani, Marsala, Girgenti, and Cefalu, there are decent second-rate inns, but in the interior the generality are like the Spanish "venta," furnishing nothing but eggs, bread, and wine.

The "Guida Generale per La Sicilia," by Power, should by all means be obtained, especially by the man of science and the student of natural history. Not a tithe of the churches it enumerates are, however, worthy of the slightest attention, and the traveller should be on his guard against its strain of undistinguishing panegyric. The "Normans in Sicily," by Gally Knight, with the folio illustrations—the folios of the Duke of Serra-di-falco, on Sicilian Antiquities—the "Autumn in Sicily," by the Marquis of Ormonde—the Histories of Palmeri—Smythe's "Sicily"—and the "Sicilian Vespers" of Amari, of which there is an English translation, have been already mentioned, and will be consulted by those desirous of further information upon the history, antiquities, and statistics of the island.

Circular notes are cashed by the corresponding bankers at Messina, Palermo, and Catania.

DISTANCES ON PRINCIPAL ROADS.

Journey from Messina to Palermo, through the interior, performed by the mail in forty-six hours, and requiring five days with a private carriage. Inns between Catania and Palermo very bad, being mere "ventas."

	Posts.	Miles.
Scaletta	1¼	10½
Agrò	1¼	10
Giardini (Taormina)	1	9
Giarra	1½	12
Aci Reale	1¼	10
Catania	1¼	10
Paternò	1½	12½
Adernò	1½	12½
Sisto	1	9
Regalbuto	1	6
S. Filippo d'Argirò	1¼	10
Leonforte	1	9
Misericordia (Castro Giovanni)	1½	12
Villarosa	1½	11
S. Caterina	1½	12
Landro	1	9
Vallelunga	1½	12
Gulfa	1	9
Manganaro	1½	12
Sottovicari	1	7
Villafrati	1	8
Missilmeri	1½	12
Palermo	1¼	10
Total	29	234½

CARRIAGE-ROAD FROM MESSINA TO PALERMO BY THE COAST.

	Posts.	Miles.
Spadafora	1¾	14
Barcellona	2	16
Patti	2½	18
Brolo		12
Torrenova		16
S. Stefano		24
Cefalù		24
Termine	1¼	24
Palermo	1¼	24
Total	8¾	172

CARRIAGE-ROAD ROUND ETNA, FROM CATANIA TO GIARDINI (AUTHOR'S ROUTE).

	Posts.	Miles.
Misterbianco		
Paternò	1½	12½
Licodia		
Biancavilla		
Adernò	1½	12½
Bronté	1½	12
Randazzo	1½	12
Piedimonte	2	18
Giardini	1	9
Total	9	76

Journey in three days and a half from Syracuse to Girgenti, by mule road:—

	Miles.
Floridia	9¾
Palazzolo	20¼
Ragusa	14¾
Comiso	8¼
Vittoria	7
Terranova	18
Alicata	19
Palma	12
Girgenti	18
Total	127

From Girgenti to Palermo, four days, (author's route,) mu e road:—

	Miles.
Siculiana	12
Montallegro	7½
Sciacca	22
Selinunte	22
Castel Vetrano	6
Salemi	14
Vita	5
Calatafime	4
Segesta	3
Calatafime (return)	3
Alcamo	11
Partenico	14
Borghetto	2
Monreale	11½
Palermo	4½
Total	141½

There is also a carriage-road direct across the island, between Girgenti and Palermo, but it misses Selinunte and Segesta.

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